PRACTICAL SERMONS,

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED.

BY THE LATE REVEREND

Mr JONATHAN EDWARDS,

President of the College of New-Jersey.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THESE Sermons were tranſcribed from the Author's original manuſcripts by his ſon, the Reverend Dr Jonathan Edwards of Newhaven, and never before publiſhed. By the following extract from a letter of Dr Edwards to the Reverend Mr Ryland junior, the public will learn, that on proper encouragement, his Miſcellaneous Thoughts on various Doctrines, and his Notes on various texts of Scripture, will be publiſhed.

"As to manuſcripts of my father, his Miſcellanies are "the moſt complete and important. They contain his "Thoughts on the various doctrines of Theology; "and what is written on any doctrine is kept diſtinct, "though written at different times, and interſperſed "through one thouſand pages. Theſe diſtinct eſſays "may be collected under their proper heads, and "would afford great pleaſure and improvement to all "who have a taſte for his writings. Perhaps enough "out of theſe Miſcellanies may be collected to fill "three ſuch volumes as that on the 'Freedom of the "Will.' Nor is any thing wanting to the publica-"tion of them, but a proſpect of their ſale. Beſide theſe, "his Commentaries on Scripture may, at leaſt many of "them, be publiſhed with advantage, under the title of, "'Notes on various Texts of Scripture.' His diary "was not written in ſhort hand. A more particular "account of my father's life may be publiſhed, if it be "judged beſt."

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SERMON I.*

The Importance and Advantage of a thorough Knowledge of Divine Truth.

HEBREWS, v. 12.

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

THESE words are a complaint, which the apoſtle makes of a certain defect in the Chriſtian Hebrews, to whom he wrote. Wherein we may obſerve,

1. What the defect complained of is, viz. A want of ſuch a proficiency in the knowledge of the doctrines and myſteries of religion, as might have been expected of them. The apoſtle complains of them, that they had not made that progreſs in their acquaintance with the things of divinity, or things taught in the oracles of God, which they ought to have made. And he means to reprove them, not merely for their deficiency in *ſpiritual* and *experimental* knowledge of divine things, but for their deficiency in a *doctrinal* acquaintance with the principles of religion, and the truths of Chriſtian divinity; as is evident by ſeveral things.

It appears by the manner in which the apoſtle introduces this complaint or reproof. The occaſion of his introducing it is this: In the next verſe but one preceding, he mentions Chriſt's being an high prieſt after the order of Melchizedek: "Called of God an high prieſt "after the order of Melchizedek." This Melchizedek being in the Old Teſtament, which was the oracles of

* Dated November 1739.

God, held forth as an eminent type of Chriſt, and the account we there have of Melchizedek containing many goſpel myſteries, theſe the apoſtle was willing to point out to the Chriſtian Hebrews. But he apprehended, that through their weakneſs in knowledge, and little acquaintance in myſteries of that nature, they would not underſtand him; and therefore breaks off for the preſent from ſaying any thing about Melchizedek. Thus, in verſ. 11. "Of whom we have many things to ſay, "and hard to be uttered; ſeeing ye are dull of hear-"ing;" i. e. there are many things concerning Melchizedek, which contain wonderful goſpel-myſteries, and which I would take notice of to you, were it not that I am afraid, that through your dulneſs and backwardneſs in underſtanding theſe things, you would only be puzzled and confounded by my diſcourſe, and ſo receive no benefit; and that it would be too hard for you, as meat that is too ſtrong.

Then come in the words of the text: "For when "for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need "that one teach you again which be the firſt principles "of the oracles of God; and are become ſuch as have "need of milk, and not of ſtrong meat." As much as to ſay, Indeed it might have been expected of you, that you ſhould have known enough of divinity, and the holy ſcriptures, to be able to underſtand and digeſt ſuch myſteries: but it is not ſo with you.

Again, The apoſtle ſpeaks of their proficiency in ſuch knowledge as is conveyed and received by *human* teaching; as appears by that expreſſion, "When for the time "ye ought to be teachers;" which includes not only a practical and experimental, but alſo a doctrinal knowledge of the truths and myſteries of religion.

Again, The apoſtle ſpeaks of ſuch a knowledge, whereby Chriſtians are enabled to digeſt ſtrong meat; i. e. to underſtand thoſe things in divinity which are more abſtruſe and difficult to be underſtood, and which require great ſkill in things of this nature. This is more fully expreſſed in the two next verſes: "For every one "that uſeth milk, is unſkilful in the word of righte-"ouſneſs: for he is a babe. But ſtrong meat belong-"eth to them that are of full age, even thoſe who, by "reaſon of uſe, have their ſenſes exerciſed to diſcern "both good and evil."

Again, It is ſuch a knowledge, that proficiency in it ſhall

ſhall carry perſons beyond the firſt principles of religion. As here; "Ye have need that one teach you "again which be the firſt principles of the oracles of "God." Therefore the apoſtle, in the beginning of the next chapter, adviſes them, "to leave the firſt prin- "ciples of the doctrine of Chriſt, and to go on unto "perfection."

2. We may obſerve wherein the fault of this defect appears, viz. in that they had not made proficiency according to their time. For the time, they ought to have been teachers. As they were Chriſtians, their buſineſs was to learn and gain Chriſtian knowledge. They were ſcholars in the ſchool of Chriſt; and if they had improved their time in learning, as they ought to have done, they might, by the time when the apoſtle wrote, have been fit to be teachers in this ſchool. To whatever buſineſs any one is devoted, it may be expected that his perfection in it ſhall be anſwerable to the time he has had to learn and perfect himſelf.—Chriſtians ſhould not always remain babes, but ſhould grow in Chriſtian knowledge; and leaving the food of babes, which is milk, ſhould learn to digeſt ſtrong meat.

DOCTRINE. Every Chriſtian ſhould make a buſineſs of endeavouring to grow in knowledge in divinity.

This is indeed eſteemed the buſineſs of divines and miniſters: it is commonly thought to be their work, by the ſtudy of the ſcriptures, and other inſtructive books, to gain knowledge; and moſt ſeem to think that it may be left to them, as what belongeth not to others. But if the apoſtle had entertained this notion, he would never have blamed the Chriſtian Hebrews for not having acquired knowledge enough to be teachers; Or if he had thought, that this concerned Chriſtians in general only as a thing by the by, and that their time ſhould not in a conſiderable meaſure be taken up with this buſineſs; he never would have ſo much blamed them, that their proficiency in knowledge had not been anſwerable to the time which they had had to learn.

In handling this ſubject, I ſhall ſhow,

1. What divinity is.
2. What kind of knowledge in divinity is intended in the doctrine.
3. Why knowledge in divinity is neceſſary.

4. Why all Chriſtians ſhould make a buſineſs of endeavouring to grow in this knowledge.

I. I ſhall very briefly ſhow what divinity is.

Various definitions have been given of it by thoſe who have treated on the ſubject. I ſhall not now ſtand to enquire which, according to the rules of art, is the moſt accurate definition; but ſhall ſo define or deſcribe it, as I think has the greateſt tendency to convey a notion of it to this auditory.

By divinity is meant, That ſcience or doctrine which comprehends all thoſe truths and rules which concern the great buſineſs of religion. There are various kinds of arts and ſciences taught and learned in the ſchools, which are converſant about various objects; about the works of nature in general, as philoſophy; or the viſible heavens, as aſtronomy; or the ſea, as navigation; or the earth, as geography; or the body of man, as phyſic and anatomy; or the ſoul of man, with regard to its natural powers and qualities, as logic and pneumatology; or about human government, as politics and juriſprudence. But there is one ſcience, or one certain kind of knowledge and doctrine, which is above all the reſt, as it is concerning God and the great buſineſs of religion: *this is divinity;* which is not learned, as other ſciences, merely by the improvement of man's natural reaſon, but is taught by God himſelf in a certain book that he hath given for that end, full of inſtruction. This is the rule which God hath given to the world to be their guide in ſearching after this kind of knowledge, and is a ſummary of all things of this nature needful for us to know. Upon this account divinity is rather called a doctrine, than an art or ſcience.

Indeed there is what is called *natural religion* or *divinity*. There are many truths concerning God, and our duty to him, which are evident by the light of nature. But Chriſtian divinity, properly ſo called, is not evident by the light of nature; it depends on revelation. Such are our circumſtances now in our fallen ſtate, that nothing which it is needful for us to know concerning God, is manifeſt by the light of nature in the manner in which it is neceſſary for us to know it. For the knowledge of no truth in divinity is of any ſignificance to us, any otherwiſe than as it ſome way or other belongs to the goſpel ſcheme, or as it relates to a Mediator.

tor. But the light of nature teaches us no truth of divinity in this manner. Therefore it cannot be ſaid, that we come to the knowledge of any part of Chriſtian divinity by the light of nature. The light of nature teaches no truth as it is in Jeſus. It is only the word of God, contained in the Old and New Teſtament, which teaches us Chriſtian divinity.

Divinity comprehends all that is taught in the ſcriptures, and ſo all that we need know, or is to be known, concerning God and Jeſus Chriſt, concerning our duty to God, and our happineſs in God. Divinity is commonly defined, *the doctrine of living to God;* and by ſome who ſeem to be more accurate, *the doctrine of living to God by Chriſt.* It comprehends all Chriſtian doctrines as they are in Jeſus, and all Chriſtian rules directing us in living to God by Chriſt. There is nothing in divinity, no one doctrine, no promiſe, no rule, but what ſome way or other relates to the Chriſtian and divine life, or our living to God by Chriſt. They all relate to this, in two reſpects, viz. as they tend to promote our living to God here in this world, in a life of faith and holineſs, and alſo as they tend to bring us to a life of perfect holineſs and happineſs, in the full enjoyment of God hereafter.——But I haſten to the

II. Thing propoſed, viz. To ſhow what kind of knowledge in divinity is intended in the doctrine.

Here I would obſerve,

1. That there are two kinds of knowledge of the things of divinity, viz. *ſpeculative* and *practical*, or in other terms, *natural* and *ſpiritual.* The former remains only in the head. No other faculty but the underſtanding is concerned in it. It conſiſts in having a natural or rational knowledge of the things of religion, or ſuch a knowledge as is to be obtained by the natural exerciſe of our own faculties, without any ſpecial illumination of the Spirit of God. The latter reſts not entirely in the head, or in the ſpeculative ideas of things; but the heart is concerned in it: it principally conſiſts in the ſenſe of the heart. The mere intellect, without the heart, the will or the inclination, is not the ſeat of it. And it may not only be called ſeeing, but feeling or taſting. Thus there is a difference between having a right ſpeculative notion of the doctrines contained in the word of God, and having a due ſenſe of them in the

the heart. In the former conſiſts ſpeculative or natural knowledge of the things of divinity; in the latter conſiſts the ſpiritual or practical knowledge of them.

2. Neither of theſe is intended in the doctrine excluſively of the other: but it is intended that we ſhould ſeek the former in order to the latter. The latter, even a ſpiritual and practical knowledge of divinity, is of the greateſt importance; for a ſpeculative knowledge of it, without a ſpiritual knowledge, is in vain and to no purpoſe, but to make our condemnation the greater. Yet a ſpeculative knowledge is alſo of infinite importance in this reſpect, that without it we can have no ſpiritual or practical knowledge; as may be ſhown by and by.

I have already ſhown, that the apoſtle ſpeaks not only of a ſpiritual knowledge, but of ſuch knowledge as can be acquired, and communicated from one to another. Yet it is not to be thought, that he means this excluſively of the other. But he would have the Chriſtian Hebrews ſeek the one, in order to the other. Therefore the former is firſt and moſt directly intended; it is intended that Chriſtians ſhould, by reading and other proper means, ſeek a good rational knowledge of the things of divinity. The latter is more indirectly intended, ſince it is to be ſought by the other, as its end.—— But I proceed to the

III. Thing propoſed, viz. To ſhow the uſefulneſs and neceſſity of knowledge in divinity.

1. There is no other way by which any means of grace whatſoever can be of any benefit, but by knowledge. All teaching is in vain, without learning. Therefore the preaching of the goſpel would be wholly to no purpoſe, if it conveyed no knowledge to the mind.— There is an order of men which Chriſt has appointed on purpoſe to be teachers in his church. They are to teach the things of divinity. But they teach in vain, if no knowledge in theſe things is gained by their teaching. It is impoſſible that their teaching and preaching ſhould be a mean of grace, or of any good in the hearts of their hearers, any otherwiſe than by knowledge imparted to the underſtanding. Otherwiſe it would be of as much benefit to the auditory, if the miniſter ſhould preach in ſome unknown tongue. All the difference is, that preaching in a known tongue conveys ſomething to the underſtanding, which preaching in an unknown

unknown tongue doth not. On this account, ſuch preaching muſt be unprofitable. Men in ſuch things receive nothing, when they underſtand nothing; and are not at all edified, unleſs ſome knowledge be conveyed; agreeably to the apoſtle's arguing in 1 Cor. xiv. 2.—6.

No ſpeech can be any mean of grace, but by conveying knowledge. Otherwiſe the ſpeech is as much loſt as if there had been no man there, and he that ſpoke, had ſpoken only into the air; as it follows in the paſſage juſt quoted, verſ. 6.—10. He that doth not underſtand, can receive no faith, nor any other grace; for God deals with man as with a rational creature; and when faith is in exerciſe, it is not about ſomething he knows not what. Therefore hearing is abſolutely neceſſary to faith; becauſe hearing is neceſſary to underſtanding, Rom. x. 14. "How ſhall they believe in him "of whom they have not heard?"

So there can be no love without knowledge. It is not according to the nature of the human ſoul, to love an object which is entirely unknown. The heart cannot be ſet upon an object of which there is no idea in the underſtanding. The reaſons which induce the ſoul to love, muſt firſt be underſtood, before they can have a reaſonable influence on the heart.

God hath given us the Bible, which is a book of inſtructions. But this book can be of no manner of profit to us, any otherwiſe than as it conveys ſome knowledge to the mind: it can profit us no more than if it were written in the Chineſe or Tartarian language, of which we know not one word.

So the ſacraments of the goſpel can have a proper effect no other way, than by conveying ſome knowledge. They repreſent certain things by viſible ſigns. And what is the end of ſigns, but to convey ſome knowledge of the things ſignified? Such is the nature of man, that nothing can come at the heart but through the door of the underſtanding: and there can be no ſpiritual knowledge of that of which there is not firſt a rational knowledge. It is impoſſible that any one ſhould ſee the truth or excellency of any doctrine of the goſpel, who knows not what that doctrine is. A man cannot ſee the wonderful excellency and love of Chriſt in doing ſuch and ſuch things for ſinners, unleſs his underſtanding be firſt informed how thoſe things were done. He cannot have

have a taſte of the ſweetneſs and divine excellency of ſuch and ſuch things contained in divinity, unleſs he firſt have a notion that there are ſuch and ſuch things.

2. Without knowledge in divinity, none would differ from the moſt ignorant and barbarous Heathens. The Heathens remain in groſs Heatheniſh darkneſs, becauſe they are not inſtructed, and have not obtained the knowledge of the truths of divinity. So if we live under the preaching of the goſpel, this will make us to differ from them, only by conveying to us more knowledge of the things of divinity

3. If men have no knowledge of theſe things, the faculty of reaſon in him will be wholly in vain. The faculty of reaſon and underſtanding was given for *actual* underſtanding and knowledge. If a man have no actual knowledge, the faculty or capacity of knowing is of no uſe to him. And if he have actual knowledge, yet if he be deſtitute of the knowledge of thoſe things which are the laſt end of his being, and for the ſake of the knowledge of which he had more underſtanding given him than the beaſts; then ſtill his faculty of reaſon is in vain; he might as well have been a beaſt, as a man with this knowledge. But the things of divinity are the things to know which we had the faculty of reaſon given us. They are the things which appertain to the end of our being, and to the great buſineſs for which we are made. Therefore a man cannot have his faculty of underſtanding to any purpoſe, any further than he hath knowledge of the things of divinity.

So that this kind of knowledge is abſolutely neceſſary. Other kinds of knowledge may be very uſeful. Some other ſciences, ſuch as aſtronomy, and natural philoſophy, and geography, may be very excellent in their kind. But the knowledge of this divine ſcience is infinitely more uſeful and important than that of all other ſciences whatever.

IV. I come now to the *fourth*, and principal thing propoſed under the doctrine, viz. To give the reaſons why all Chriſtians ſhould make a buſineſs of endeavouring to grow in the knowledge of divinity.—This implies two things.

1. That Chriſtians ought not to content themſelves with ſuch degrees of knowledge in divinity as they have already obtained. It ſhould not ſatisfy them, that they know

know as much as is abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation, but ſhould ſeek to make progreſs.

2. That this endeavouring to make progreſs in ſuch knowledge ought not to be attended to as a thing by the by, but all Chriſtians ſhould make a buſineſs of it: they ſhould look upon it as a part of their daily buſineſs, and no ſmall part of it neither. It ſhould be attended to as a conſiderable part of the work of their high calling.——The reaſon of both theſe may appear in the following things.

(1.) Our buſineſs ſhould doubtleſs much conſiſt in employing thoſe faculties, by which we are diſtinguiſhed from the beaſts, about thoſe things which are the main end of thoſe faculties. The reaſon why we have faculties ſuperior to thoſe of the brutes given us, is, that we are indeed deſigned for a ſuperior employment. That which the Creator intended ſhould be our main employment, is ſomething above what he intended the beaſts for, and therefore hath given us ſuperior powers. Therefore, without doubt, it ſhould be a conſiderable part of our buſineſs to improve thoſe ſuperior faculties. But the faculty by which we are chiefly diſtinguiſhed from the brutes, is the faculty of underſtanding. It follows then, that we ſhould make it our chief buſineſs to improve this faculty, and ſhould by no means proſecute it as a buſineſs by the by. For us to make the improvement of this faculty a buſineſs by the by, is in effect for us to make the faculty of underſtanding itſelf a by-faculty, if I may ſo ſpeak, a faculty of leſs importance than others: whereas indeed it is the higheſt faculty we have.

But we cannot make a buſineſs of the improvement of our intellectual faculty, any otherwiſe than by making a buſineſs of improving ourſelves in actual underſtanding and knowledge. So that thoſe who make not this very much their buſineſs; but inſtead of improving their underſtanding to acquire knowledge, are chiefly devoted to their inferior powers, to provide wherewithal to pleaſe their ſenſes, and gratify their animal appetites, and ſo rather make their underſtanding a ſervant to their inferior powers, than their inferior powers ſervants to their underſtanding; not only behave themſelves in a manner not becoming Chriſtians, but alſo act as if they had forgotten that they are men, and that God

hath ſet them above the brutes, by giving them underſtanding.

God hath given to man ſome things in common with the brutes, as his outward ſenſes, his bodily appetites, a capacity of bodily pleaſure and pain, and other animal faculties: And ſome things he hath given him ſuperior to the brutes, the chief of which is a faculty of underſtanding and reaſon. Now God never gave man thoſe faculties whereby he is above the brutes, to be ſubject to thoſe which he hath in common with the brutes. This would be great confuſion, and equivalent to making man to be a ſervant to the beaſts. On the contrary, he has given thoſe inferior powers to be employed in ſubſerviency to man's underſtanding; and therefore it muſt be a great part of man's principal buſineſs, to improve his underſtanding by acquiring knowledge. If ſo, then it will follow, that it ſhould be a main part of his buſineſs to improve his underſtanding in acquiring divine knowledge, or the knowledge of the things of divinity: for the knowledge of theſe things is the principal end of this faculty. God gave man the faculty of underſtanding, chiefly, that he might underſtand divine things.

The wiſer Heathens were ſenſible that the main buſineſs of man was the improvement and exerciſe of his underſtanding. But they were in the dark, as they knew not the object about which the underſtanding ſhould chiefly be employed. That ſcience which many of them thought ſhould chiefly employ the underſtanding, was philoſophy; and accordingly they made it their chief buſineſs to ſtudy it. But we who enjoy the light of the goſpel are more happy; we are not left, as to this particular, in the dark. God hath told us about what things we ſhould chiefly employ our underſtandings, having given us a book full of divine inſtructions, holding forth many glorious objects about which all rational creatures ſhould chiefly employ their underſtandings. Theſe inſtructions are accommodated to perſons of all capacities and conditions, and proper to be ſtudied, not only by men of learning, but by perſons of every character, learned and unlearned, young and old, men and women. Therefore the acquiſition of knowledge in theſe things ſhould be a main buſineſs of all thoſe who have the advantage of enjoying the Holy Scriptures.

(2.) The

(2.) The things of divinity are things of ſuperlative excellency, and are worthy that all ſhould make a buſineſs of endeavouring to grow in the knowledge of them. There are no things ſo worthy to be known as theſe things. They are as much above thoſe things which are treated of in other ſciences, as heaven is above the earth. God himſelf, the eternal Three in one, is the chief object of this ſcience: in the next place, Jeſus Chriſt, as God-man and Mediator, and the glorious work of redemption, the moſt glorious work that ever was wrought: then the great things of the heavenly world, the glorious and eternal inheritance purchaſed by Chriſt, and promiſed in the goſpel; the work of the Holy Spirit of God on the hearts of men; our duty to God, and the way in which we ourſelves may become like angels, and like God himſelf in our meaſure: all theſe are objects of this ſcience.

Such things as theſe have been the main ſubject of the ſtudy of the holy patriarchs, prophets, and apoſtles, and the moſt excellent men that ever were in the world, and are alſo the ſubject of the ſtudy of the angels in heaven; 1 Pet. i. 10. 11. 12.

Theſe things are ſo excellent and worthy to be known, that the knowledge of them will richly pay for all the pains and labour of an earneſt ſeeking of it. If there were a great treaſure of gold and pearls hid in the earth but ſhould accidentally be found, and ſhould be opened among us with ſuch circumſtances that all might have as much as they could gather of it; would not every one think it worth his while to make a buſineſs of gathering it while it ſhould laſt? But that treaſure of divine knowledge, which is contained in the Scriptures, and is provided for every one to gather to himſelf as much of it as he can, is a far more rich treaſure than any one of gold and pearls. How buſy are all ſorts of men, all over the world, in getting riches? But this knowledge is a far better kind of riches, than that after which they ſo diligently and laborioufly purſue.

SERMON II.

The Subject continued.

HEBREWS, v. 12.

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the firſt principles of the oracles of God; and are become ſuch as have need of milk, and not of ſtrong meat.

THE *doctrine* which in the preceding diſcourſe I deduced from theſe words is, that

Every Chriſtian ſhould make a buſineſs of endeavouring to grow in knowledge in divinity.

And at the concluſion of the diſcourſe I was giving the reaſons of this *doctrine*. Two reaſons I then mentioned; and now proceed to obſerve,

3. The things of divinity not only concern miniſters, but are of infinite importance to all Chriſtians. It is not with the doctrines of divinity as it is with the doctrines of philoſophy and other ſciences. Theſe laſt are generally ſpeculative points, which are of little concern in human life; and it very little alters the caſe as to our temporal or ſpiritual intereſts, whether we know them or not. Philoſophers differ about them, ſome being of one opinion, and others of another. And while they are engaged in warm diſputes about them, others may well leave them to diſpute among themſelves, without troubling their heads much about them; it being of little concern to them, whether the one or the other be in the right.

But it is not thus in matters of divinity. The doctrines of this nearly concern every one. They are about thoſe things which relate to every man's eternal ſalvation and happineſs. The common people cannot ſay, Let us leave theſe matters to miniſters and divines; let them diſpute them out among themſelves as they can; they

they concern not us: For they are of infinite importance to every man. Thoſe doctrines of divinity which relate to the eſſence, attributes, and ſubſiſtencies of God, concern all; as it is of infinite importance to common people, as well as to miniſters, to know what kind of being God is. For he is the Being who hath made us all, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being;" who is the Lord of all; the Being to whom we are all accountable; is the laſt end of our being, and the only fountain of our happineſs.

The doctrines alſo which relate to Jeſus Chriſt and his mediation, his incarnation, his life and death, his reſurrection and aſcenſion, his ſitting at the right hand of the Father, his ſatisfaction and interceſſion, infinitely concern common people as well as divines. They ſtand in as much need of this Saviour, and of an intereſt in his perſon and offices, and the things which he hath done and ſuffered, as miniſters and divines.

The ſame may be ſaid of the doctrines which relate to the manner of a ſinner's juſtification, or the way in which he becomes intereſted in the mediation of Chriſt. They equally concern all; for all ſtand in equal neceſſity of juſtification before God. That eternal condemnation, to which we are all naturally expoſed, is equally dreadful. So with reſpect to thoſe doctrines of divinity, which relate to the work of the Spirit of God on the heart, in the application of redemption in our effectual calling and ſanctification, all are equally concerned in them. There is no doctrine of divinity whatever, which doth not ſome way or other concern the eternal intereſt of every Chriſtian. None of the things which God hath taught us in his word are needleſs ſpeculations, or trivial matters; all of them are indeed important points.

4. We may argue from the great things which God hath done in order to give us inſtruction in theſe things. As to other ſciences, he hath left us to ourſelves, to the light of our own reaſon. But the things of divinity being of infinitely greater importance to us, he hath not left us to an uncertain guide; but hath himſelf given us a revelation of the truth in theſe matters, and hath done very great things to convey and confirm to us this revelation; raiſing up many prophets in different ages, immediately inſpiring them with his Holy Spirit, and confirming their doctrine with innumerable miracles or

wonderful

wonderful works out of the eſtabliſhed courſe of nature. Yea, he raiſed up a ſucceſſion of prophets, which was upheld for ſeveral ages.

It was very much for this end that God ſeparated the people of Iſrael, in ſo wonderful a manner, from all other people, and kept them ſeparate; that to them he might commit the oracles of God, and that from them they might be communicated to the world. He hath alſo often ſent angels to bring divine inſtructions to men; and hath often himſelf appeared to men in miraculous ſymbols or repreſentations of his preſence: and now in theſe laſt days hath ſent his own Son into the world, to be his great prophet, to teach us divinity. Heb. 1. at the beginning. By means of all God hath given a book of divine inſtructions, which contains the ſum of divinity. Now, theſe things hath God done, not only for the inſtruction of miniſters and men of learning; but for the inſtruction of all men, of all ſorts, learned and unlearned, men, women, and children. And certainly if God doth ſuch great things to *teach* us, we ought not to do little to *learn*.

God hath not made giving inſtructions to men in things of divinity a buſineſs by the by; but a buſineſs which he hath undertaken and proſecuted in a courſe of great and wonderful diſpenſations, as an affair in which his heart hath been greatly engaged; which is ſometimes in Scripture ſignified by the expreſſion of God's riſing early to teach us, and to ſend prophets and teachers to us. Jer. vii. 25. "Since that day "that your fathers came forth out of the land of "Egypt, unto this day, I have even ſent unto you all "my ſervants the prophets, daily riſing up early, and "ſending them." And ſo, verſ. 13. "I ſpake unto "you, riſing up early, and ſpeaking." This is a figurative ſpeech, ſignifying, that God hath not done this as a by-buſineſs, but as a buſineſs of great importance, in which he took great care, and had his heart much engaged; becauſe perſons are wont to riſe early to proſecute ſuch buſineſs as they are earneſtly engaged in.—If God hath been ſo engaged in teaching, certainly we ſhould not be negligent in learning; nor ſhould we make growing in knowledge a by-buſineſs, but a great part of the buſineſs of our lives.

5. It may be argued from the abundance of the inſtructions which God hath given us, from the largeneſs of that book which God hath given to teach us divinity,

divinity, and from the great variety that is therein contained. Much was taught by Moſes of old, which we have tranſmitted down to us; after that, other books were from time to time added; much is taught us by David and Solomon; and many and excellent are the inſtructions communicated by the prophets: Yet God did not think all this enough, but after this ſent Chriſt and his apoſtles, by whom there is added a great and excellent treaſure to that holy book, which is to be our rule in the ſtudy of divinity.

This book was written for the uſe of all; all are directed to ſearch the ſcriptures, John, v. 39. "Search "the ſcriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal "life; and they are they that teſtify of me;" and Iſ. xxxiv. 16. "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, "and read." They that read and underſtand are pronounced bleſſed, Rev. i. 3. "Bleſſed is he that readeth, "and they that underſtand the words of this prophe-"cy." If this be true of that particular book of the *Revelation*, much more is it true of the Bible in general. Nor is it to be believed that God would have given inſtructions in ſuch abundance, if he had intended that receiving inſtruction ſhould be only a by-concernment with us.

It is to be conſidered, that all thoſe abundant inſtructions which are contained in the ſcriptures were written for that end, that they might be underſtood; otherwiſe they are not inſtructions. That which is not given that the learner may underſtand it, is not given for the learner's inſtruction; and unleſs we endeavour to grow in the knowledge of divinity, a very great part of thoſe inſtructions will to us be in vain; for we can receive benefit by no more of the ſcriptures than we underſtand, no more than if they were locked up in an unknown tongue. We have reaſon to bleſs God that he hath given us ſuch various and plentiful inſtruction in his word; but we ſhall be hypocritical in ſo doing, if we after all content ourſelves with but little of this inſtruction.

When God hath opened a very large treaſure before us, for the ſupply of our wants, and we thank him that he hath given us ſo much; if at the ſame time we be willing to remain deſtitute of the greateſt part of it, becauſe we are too lazy to gather it, this will not ſhow the ſincerity of our thankfulneſs. We are now under much

much greater advantages to acquire knowledge in divinity, than the people of God were of old, becauſe ſince that time the canon of ſcripture is much encreaſed. But if we be negligent of our advantages, we may be never the better for them, and may remain with as little knowledge as they.

6. However diligently we apply ourſelves, there is room enough to increaſe our knowledge in divinity, without coming to an end. None have this excuſe to make for not diligently applying themſelves to gain knowledge in divinity, that they know all already; nor can they make this excuſe, that they have no need diligently to apply themſelves, in order to know all that is to be known. None can excuſe themſelves for want of buſineſs in which to employ themſelves. Here is room enough to employ ourſelves for ever in this divine ſcience, with the utmoſt application. Thoſe who have applied themſelves moſt cloſely, have ſtudied the longeſt, and have made the greateſt attainments in this knowledge, know but little of what is to be known. The ſubject is inexhauſtible. That divine Being, who is the main ſubject of this ſcience, is infinite, and there is no end to the glory of his perfections. His works at the ſame time are wonderful, and cannot be found out to perfection; eſpecially the work of redemption, which is that work of God about which the ſcience of divinity is chiefly converſant, is full of unſearchable wonders.

The word of God, which is given for our inſtruction in divinity, contains enough in it to employ us to the end of our lives, and then we ſhall leave enough uninveſtigated to employ the heads of the ableſt divines to the end of the world. The Pſalmiſt found an end to the things that are human; but he could never find an end to what is contained in the word of God: Pſal. cxix. 96. "I have ſeen an end to all perfection; but thy command is exceeding broad." There is enough in this divine ſcience to employ the underſtandings of ſaints and angels to all eternity.

7. It doubtleſs concerns every one to endeavour to excel in the knowledge of things which pertain to his profeſſion, or principal calling. If it concerns men to excel in any thing, or in any wiſdom or knowledge at all, it certainly concerns them to excel in the affairs of their main profeſſion and work. But the calling and work of

of every Chriſtian is to live to God. This is ſaid to be his *high calling*, Phil. iii. 14. This is the buſineſs, and, if I may ſo ſpeak, the *trade* of a Chriſtian, his main work, and indeed ſhould be his only work. No buſineſs ſhould be done by a Chriſtian, but as it is ſome way or other a part of this. Therefore certainly the Chriſtian ſhould endeavour to be well acquainted with thoſe things which belong to this work, that he may fulfil it, and be thoroughly furniſhed to it.

It becomes one who is called to be a ſoldier, and to go a warfare, to endeavour to excel in the art of war. It becomes one who is called to be a mariner, and to ſpend his life in ſailing the ocean, to endeavour to excel in the art of navigation. It becomes one who profeſſes to be a phyſician, and devotes himſelf to that work, to endeavour to excel in the knowledge of thoſe things which pertain to the art of phyſic. So it becomes all ſuch as profeſs to be Chriſtians, and to devote themſelves to the practice of Chriſtianity, to endeavour to excel in the knowledge of divinity.

8. It may be argued from this, that God hath appointed an order of men for this end, to aſſiſt perſons in gaining knowledge in theſe things. He hath appointed them to be teachers, 1 Cor. xii 28.; and God hath ſet ſome in the church; firſt apoſtles, ſecondarily prophets, thirdly teachers: Eph. iv. 11. 12. "He gave "ſome apoſtles, ſome prophets, ſome evangeliſts, ſome "paſtors and teachers, for the perfecting of the ſaints, "for the work of the miniſtry, for the edifying of the "body of Chriſt." If God hath ſet them to be teachers, making that their buſineſs, then he hath made it their buſineſs to impart knowledge. But what kind of knowledge? not the knowledge of philoſophy, or of human laws, or of mechanical arts, but of divinity.

If God have made it the buſineſs of ſome to be teachers, it will follow, that he hath made it the buſineſs of others to be learners; for teachers and learners are correlates, one of which was never intended to be without the other. God hath never made it the duty of ſome to take pains to teach thoſe who are not obliged to take pains to learn. He hath not commanded miniſters to ſpend themſelves, in order to impart knowledge to thoſe who are not obliged to apply themſelves to receive it.

The name by which Chriſtians are commonly called

in the New Teſtament is *diſciples*, the ſignification of which word is *ſcholars* or *learners*. All Chriſtians are put into the ſchool of Chriſt, where their buſineſs is to learn, or receive knowledge from Chriſt, their common maſter and teacher, and from thoſe inferior teachers appointed by him to inſtruct in his name.

9. God hath in the ſcriptures plainly revealed it to be his will, that all Chriſtians ſhould diligently endeavour to excel in the knowledge of divine things. It is the revealed will of God, that Chriſtians ſhould not only have ſome knowledge of things of this nature, but that they ſhould be *enriched with all knowledge*: 1 Cor. i. 4. 5. "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace "of God that is given you by Jeſus Chriſt, that in eve-"ry thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and "in *all knowledge*." So the apoſtle earneſtly prayed, that the Chriſtian Philippians might abound more and more, not only in love, but in Chriſtian *knowledge*: Philip. i. 9. "And this I pray, that your love may a-"bound yet more and more in *knowledge*, and in *all* "*judgement*." So the Apoſtle Peter adviſes to "give "all diligence to add to faith virtue, and to virtue "*knowledge*," 2 Pet. i. 5.; and the Apoſtle Paul, in the next chapter to that wherein is the text, counſels the Chriſtian Hebrews, leaving the firſt principles of the doctrine of Chriſt, to go on to perfection. He would by no means have them always to reſt only in thoſe fundamental doctrines of repentance, and faith, and the reſurrection from the dead, and the eternal judgement, in which they were indoctrinated when they were firſt baptiſed, and had the apoſtles hands laid on them, at their firſt initiation in Chriſtianity. See Heb. vi. at the beginning.

APPLICATION.

The uſe that I would make of this doctrine is, to *exhort* all diligently to endeavour to gain this kind of knowledge.

Conſider yourſelves as ſcholars or diſciples, put into the ſchool of Chriſt; and therefore be diligent to make proficiency in Chriſtian knowledge. Content not yourſelves with this, that you have been taught your catechiſm in your childhood, and that you know as much

of

of the principles of religion as is neceſſary to ſalvation. So you will be guilty of what the apoſtle warns againſt, viz. going no further than laying the foundation of repentance from dead works, &c.

You are all called to be Chriſtians, and this is your profeſſion. Endeavour, therefore, to acquire knowledge in things which pertain to your profeſſion. Let not your teachers have cauſe to complain, that while they ſpend and are ſpent, to impart knowledge to you, you take little pains to learn. It is a great encouragement to an inſtructor, to have ſuch to teach as make a buſineſs of learning, bending their minds to it. This makes teaching a pleaſure, when otherwiſe it will be a very heavy and burdenſome taſk.

You all have by you a large treaſure of divine knowledge, in that you have the Bible in your hands; therefore be not contented in poſſeſſing but little of this treaſure. God hath ſpoken much to you in the ſcriptures; labour to underſtand as much of what he ſaith as you can. God hath made you all reaſonable creatures; therefore let not the noble faculty of reaſon or underſtanding lie neglected. Content not yourſelves with having ſo much knowledge as is thrown in your way, and as you receive in ſome ſenſe unavoidably by the frequent inculcation of divine truth in the preaching of the word, of which you are obliged to be hearers, or as you accidentally gain in converſation; but let it be very much your buſineſs to ſearch for it, and that with the ſame diligence and labour with which men are wont to dig in mines of ſilver and gold.

Eſpecially I would adviſe thoſe that are young to employ themſelves in this way. Men are never too old to learn; but the time of youth is eſpecially the time for learning; it is eſpecially proper for gaining and ſtoring up knowledge. —— Further, to ſtir up all, both old and young, to this duty, let me entreat you to conſider,

1. If you apply yourſelves diligently to this work, you will not want employment, when you are at leiſure from your common ſecular buſineſs. In this way, you may find ſomething in which you may profitably employ yourſelves theſe long winter-evenings. You will find ſomething elſe to do, beſides going about from houſe to houſe, ſpending one hour after another in unprofitable converſation, or, at beſt, to no other purpoſe but

to amuſe yourſelves, to fill up and wear away your time. And it is to be feared that very much of the time that is ſpent in our winter-evening viſits, is ſpent to a much worſe purpoſe than that which I have now mentioned. Solomon tells us, Prov. x. 19. "That in the multitude "of words, there wanteth not ſin." And is not this verified in thoſe who find nothing elſe to do for ſo great a part of the winter, but to go to one another's houſes, and ſpend the time in ſuch talk as comes next, or ſuch as any one's preſent diſpoſition happens to ſuggeſt?

Some diverſion is doubtleſs lawful; but for Chriſtians to ſpend ſo much of their time, ſo many long evenings, in no other converſation than that which tends to divert and amuſe, if nothing worſe, is a ſinful way of ſpending time, and tends to poverty of ſoul at leaſt, if not to outward poverty: Prov. xiv. 23. "In "all labour there is profit; but the talk of the lips "tendeth only to *penury*." Beſides, when perſons for ſo much of their time have nothing elſe to do, but to ſit, and talk, and chat in one another's chimney-corners, there is great danger of falling into fooliſh and ſinful converſation, venting their corrupt diſpoſitions, in talking againſt others, expreſſing their jealouſies and evil ſurmiſes concerning their neighbours; not conſidering what Chriſt hath ſaid, Matt. xii. 36. "Of every idle word "that men ſhall ſpeak, ſhall they give account in the "day of judgement."

If you would comply with what you have heard from this doctrine, you would find ſomething elſe to ſpend your winters in, one winter after another, beſides contention, or talking about thoſe public affairs which tend to contention. Young people might find ſomething elſe to do, beſides ſpending their time in vain company; ſomething that would be much more profitable to themſelves, as it would really turn to ſome good account; ſomething, in doing which they would both be more out of the devil's way, the way of temptation, and be more in the way of duty, and of a divine bleſſing. And even aged people would have ſomething to employ themſelves in, after they are become incapable of bodily labour. Their time, as is now often the caſe, would not lie heavy upon their hands, as they would with both profit and pleaſure be engaged in ſearching the ſcriptures, and in comparing and meditating upon the various truths which they ſhould find there.

2. This

2. This would be a noble way of ſpending your time. The Holy Spirit gives the Bereans this epithet, becauſe they diligently employed themſelves in this buſineſs: Acts, xvii. 11. "Theſe were more *noble* than thoſe of "Theſſalonica, in that they received the word with all "readineſs of mind, and ſearched the ſcriptures daily, "whether thoſe things were ſo." This is very much the employment of heaven. The inhabitants of that world ſpend much of their time in ſearching into the great things of divinity, and endeavouring to acquire knowledge in them, as we are told of the angels, 1 Pet. i. 12. "Which things the angels deſire to look into." This will be very agreeable to what you hope will be your buſineſs to all eternity, as you doubtleſs hope to join in the ſame employment with the angels of light. Solomon ſays, Prov. xxv. 2. "It is the honour of kings "to ſearch out a matter;" and certainly, above all others, to ſearch out divine matters. Now, if this be the honour even of kings, is it not equally, if not much more your honour?

3. This is a pleaſant way of improving time. Knowledge is pleaſant and delightful to intelligent creatures, and above all the knowledge of divine things; for in them are the moſt excellent truths, and the moſt beautiful and amiable objects held forth to view. However tedious the labour neceſſarily attending this buſineſs may be, yet the knowledge once obtained will richly requite the pains taken to obtain it. "When wiſdom entereth "the heart, knowledge is pleaſant to the ſoul," Prov. ii. 10.

4. This knowledge is exceeding uſeful in Chriſtian practice. Such as have much knowledge in divinity have great means and advantages for ſpiritual and ſaving knowledge; for no means of grace, as was ſaid before, have their effect on the heart, otherwiſe than by the knowledge they impart. The more you have of a rational knowledge of the things of the goſpel, the more opportunity will there be, when the Spirit ſhall be breathed into your heart, to ſee the excellency of theſe things, and to taſte the ſweetneſs of them. The Heathens, who have no rational knowledge of the things of the goſpel, have no opportunity to ſee the excellency of them; and therefore the more rational knowledge of theſe things you have, the more opportunity

and

and advantage you have to ſee the divine excellency and glory of them.

Again, The more knowledge you have of divine things, the better will you know your duty; your knowledge will be of great uſe to direct you as to your duty in particular caſes. You will alſo be the better furniſhed againſt the temptations of the devil. For the devil often takes the advantage of perſons ignorance to ply them with temptations which otherwiſe would have no hold of them.

By having much knowledge, you will be under greater advantages to conduct yourſelves with prudence and diſcretion in your Chriſtian courſe, and ſo to live much more to the honour of God and religion. Many who mean well, and are full of a good ſpirit, yet for want of prudence, conduct themſelves ſo as to wound religion. Many have a zeal of God, which doth more hurt than good, becauſe it is not according to knowledge, Rom. x. 2. The reaſon why many good men behave no better in many inſtances, is not ſo much that they want grace, as that they want knowledge.

Beſide, an increaſe of knowledge would be a great help to profitable converſation. It would ſupply you with matter for converſation when you come together, or when you viſit your neighbours: and ſo you would have leſs temptation to ſpend the time in ſuch converſation as tends to your own and others hurt.

5. Conſider the advantages you are under to grow in the knowledge of divinity. We are under far greater advantages to gain much knowledge in divinity now, than God's people under the Old Teſtament, both becauſe the canon of ſcripture is ſo much enlarged ſince that time, and alſo becauſe evangelical truths are now ſo much more plainly revealed. So that common men are now in ſome reſpects under advantages to know more of divinity, than the greateſt prophets were then. Thus that ſaying of Chriſt is in a ſenſe applicable to us, Luke x. 23. 24. "Bleſſed are the eyes which ſee the "things which ye ſee. For I tell you, that many pro-"phets and kings have deſired to ſee thoſe things which "ye ſee, and have not ſeen them; and to hear thoſe "things which ye hear, and have not heard them." We are in ſome reſpects under far greater advantages for gaining knowledge, now in theſe latter ages of the church, than Chriſtians were formerly; eſpecially by reaſon of the art of printing, of which God hath given

ven us the benefit, whereby Bibles and other books of divinity are exceedingly multiplied, and perſons may now be furniſhed with helps for the obtaining of Chriſtian knowledge, at a much eaſier and cheaper rate than they formerly could.

6. We know not what oppoſition we may meet with in the principles which we hold in divinity. We know that there are many adverſaries to the goſpel and its truths. If therefore we embrace thoſe truths, we muſt expect to be attacked by the ſaid adverſaries; and unleſs we be well informed concerning divine things, how ſhall we be able to defend ourſelves? Beſide, the Apoſtle Peter enjoins it upon us, always to be ready to give an anſwer to every man who aſketh us a reaſon of the hope that is in us. But this we cannot expect to do without conſiderable knowledge in divine things.

I ſhall now conclude my diſcourſe with ſome *directions* for the acquiſition of this knowledge.

1. Be affiduous in reading the holy ſcriptures. This is the fountain whence all knowledge in divinity muſt be derived. Therefore let not this treaſure lie by you neglected. Every man of common underſtanding who can read, may, if he pleaſe, become well acquainted with the ſcriptures. And what an excellent attainment would this be!

2. Content not yourſelves with only a curſory reading, without regarding the ſenſe. This is an ill way of reading, to which, however, many accuſtom themſelves all their days. When you read, obſerve what you read. Obſerve how things come in. Take notice of the drift of the diſcourſe, and compare one ſcripture with another. For the ſcripture, by the harmony of the different parts of it, caſts great light upon itſelf. We are expreſsly directed by Chriſt, to *ſearch* the ſcriptures, which evidently intends ſomething more than a mere curſory reading. And uſe means to find out the meaning of the ſcripture. When you have it explained in the preaching of the word, take notice of it; and if at any time a ſcripture that you did not underſtand be cleared up to your ſatisfaction, mark it, lay it up, and if poſſible remember it.

3. Procure, and diligently uſe other books which may help you to grow in this knowledge. There are many excellent books extant, which might greatly forward

ward you in this knowledge, and afford you a very profitable and pleaſant entertainment in your leiſure hours. There is doubtleſs a great defect in many, that through a loathneſs to be at a little expence, they furniſh themſelves with no more helps of this nature. They have a few books indeed, which now and then on Sabbath-days they read; but they have had them ſo long, and read them ſo often, that they are weary of them, and it is now become a dull ſtory, a mere taſk to read them.

4. Improve converſation with others to this end. How much might perſons promote each other's knowledge in divine things, if they would improve converſation as they might; if men that are ignorant were not aſhamed to ſhow their ignorance, and were willing to learn of others; if thoſe that have knowledge would communicate it, without pride and oſtentation; and if all were more diſpoſed to enter on ſuch converſation as would be for their mutual edification and inſtruction.

5. Seek not to grow in knowledge chiefly for the ſake of applauſe, and to enable you to diſpute with others; but ſeek it for the benefit of your ſouls, and in order to practice. If applauſe be your end, you will not be ſo likely to be led to the knowledge of the truth, but may juſtly, as often is the caſe of thoſe who are proud of their knowledge, be led into error to your own perdition. This being your end, if you ſhould obtain much rational knowledge, it would not be likely to be of any benefit to you, but would puff you up with pride: 1 Cor. viii. 1. "Knowledge puffeth up."

6. Seek to God, that he would direct you, and bleſs you, in this purſuit after knowledge. This is the apoſtle's direction, Jam. i. 5. "If any man lack wiſdom, "let him aſk it of God, who giveth to all liberally, and "upbraideth not." God is the fountain of all divine knowledge: Prov. ii. 6. "The Lord giveth wiſdom: "out of his mouth cometh knowledge and underſtand-"ing." Labour to be ſenſible of your own blindneſs and ignorance, and your need of the help of God, leſt you be led into error, inſtead of true knowledge: 1 Cor. iii. 18. "If any man would be wiſe, let him become a "fool, that he may be wiſe."

7. Practiſe according to what knowledge you have. This will be the way to know more. The Pſalmiſt warmly

warmly recommends this way of ſeeking knowledge in divinity, from his own experience: Pſal. cxix. 100. "I "underſtand more than the ancients, becauſe I keep "thy precepts." Chriſt alſo recommends the ſame: John, vii. 17. "If any man will do his will, he ſhall "know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whe-"ther I ſpeak of myſelf."

SERMON III*.

God the beſt Portion of the Chriſtian.

Psalm, lxxiii. 25.

Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee.

THE Pſalmiſt, in this pſalm, relates the great difficulty that he met with in his own mind, from the conſideration of the proſperity of wicked men. He tells us, verſ. 2. & 3. "As for me, my feet were almoſt "gone; my ſteps had well nigh ſlipt. For I was en-"vious at the fooliſh, when I ſaw the proſperity of the "wicked." In the 4th and following verſes, he informs us, what it was he had obſerved in the wicked, which was his temptation. In the firſt place, he obſerved, that they were very proſperous, and all things went well with them. He then obſerved their behaviour in their proſperity, and the uſe which they made of it; and that God, notwithſtanding ſuch an uſe or abuſe, continued their proſperity, as in the 6th and following verſes. Then the Pſalmiſt tells us by what means he was helped out of this difficulty, viz. by going into the ſanctuary, verſ. 16. 17.; and proceeds to inform us what conſiderations they were which helped him, viz. theſe three:

1. The conſideration of the miſerable end of wicked men. However they proſper for the preſent, yet they come to a woful end at laſt, verſ. 18. 19. 20.

2. The conſideration of the bleſſed end of the ſaints. Although the ſaints, while they live, may be afflicted, yet they come to an happy end at laſt, verſ. 21. 22. 23. 24.

* Dated April 1736.

3. The

3. The conſideration, that the godly have a much better portion than the wicked, even though they have no other portion but God; as in the text and following verſe. If it be ſo, that the wicked are in proſperity, and are not in trouble as other men; yet the godly, though they be in affliction, are in a ſtate infinitely better than the wicked, becauſe they have God for their portion. However they may have nothing elſe, this is enough, without the enjoyments of wicked men; they need deſire nothing elſe; he that hath God, hath all. Thus the Pſalmiſt profeſſes it was with him, in the ſenſe and apprehenſion which he had of things: *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee.*

In the verſe immediately preceding, the Pſalmiſt takes notice how the ſaints are happy in God, both when they are here in this world, and alſo when they are taken to another world. They are bleſſed in God in this world, in that while here God *guides them by his counſel*; and when he takes them out of this world, they are ſtill happy, in that then God *receives them to glory*. The Pſalmiſt having thus taken notice of the happineſs of the ſaints in God, both while here upon earth, and alſo when removed into another world, was probably by this obſervation led, in the next verſe, which is the text, to declare that he deſired no other portion, either in this world or in the world to come, either in heaven or upon earth.

DOCTRINE. It is the ſpirit of a truly godly man, to prefer God before all other things, either in heaven or on earth.

I. A godly man prefers God before any thing elſe in heaven.

1. He prefers God before any thing elſe that *actually is* in heaven. Every godly man hath his heart in heaven; his affections are mainly ſet on heaven, and what is to be had there. Heaven is his choſen country and inheritance. He hath reſpect to heaven, as a traveller who is on occaſion abroad in a diſtant land hath to his own country. The traveller can content himſelf to be in a ſtrange land for a while, until his preſent occaſion and buſineſs be over; but his own native land is preferred by him to all others: Heb. xi. 13. &c. "Theſe all died in faith, not having received the pro-
" miſes, but were perſuaded of them, and embraced them,
" and confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on

" the earth. For they that ſay ſuch things, declare plainly " that they ſeek a country. And truly if they had been " mindful of that country from whence they came out, " they might have had opportunity to have returned: But " now they deſire a better country, that is, an heavenly."

So alſo the reſpect which a godly perſon hath to heaven may be compared to the reſpect which a child, when he is abroad, hath to his father's houſe. He can be contented abroad for a little while; but the place to which he deſires to return, and in which to dwell, is his own home at his Father's houſe. Heaven is the true ſaint's Father's houſe: John xiv. 2. " In my Father's houſe are many manſions." John xx. 17 " I aſcend to my Father and your Father."

Now, the main reaſon why the godly man hath his heart thus in heaven, is becauſe God is there; that is the palace of the moſt high God; it is the place where God is glorioufly preſent, where he is to be ſeen, where he is to be enjoyed, where his love is glorioufly manifeſted, where the godly may be with him, ſee him as he is, and love, ſerve, praiſe, and enjoy him perfectly. It is for this chiefly that a godly man deſires heaven. If God and Chriſt were not in heaven, he would not be ſo earneſt in ſeeking it, nor would he take ſo much pains in a laborious travel through this wilderneſs, nor would the conſideration that he is going to heaven when he dies, be ſuch a comfort to him under the toils and afflictions of the world, as it now is. The martyrs would not undergo thoſe cruel ſufferings which are brought upon them by their perſecutors, with that chearfulneſs in a proſpect of going to heaven, did they not expect to go and be with Chriſt, and to enjoy God there. They would not with that chearfulneſs forſake all their earthly poſſeſſions, and all their earthly friends, as many thouſands of them have done, and wander about in poverty and baniſhment, being deſtitute, afflicted, tormented, in hopes of exchanging their earthly for an heavenly inheritance, were it not that they hope to be with their glorious Redeemer and heavenly Father in heaven.

If God and Chriſt were not in heaven, however beautiful the place be, and whatever excellent creature-inhabitants there be there, yet heaven would be but an empty place, it would be but an unlovely place. The believer's heart is in heaven, becauſe his treaſure is there; and that treaſure is Jeſus Chriſt, the ſame that we read of in Matth. xiii. 44. which is there called, " a treaſure hid in a field, which " when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy there-

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" of goeth and ſelleth all that he hath, and buyeth that " field."

2. A godly man prefers God before any thing elſe that *might be* in heaven. Not only is there nothing *actually* in heaven, which is in his eſteem equal with God; but neither is there any thing of which he can conceive as *poſſible to be there*, which by him is eſteemed and deſired equally with God. Thoſe of ſome nations and profeſſions ſuppoſe quite different enjoyments to be in heaven, from thoſe which the ſcriptures teach us to be there. The Mahometans, for inſtance, ſuppoſe that in heaven are to be enjoyed all manner of ſenſual delights and pleaſures. Many things which Mahomet has feigned are to the luſts and carnal appetites of men the moſt agreeable that he could deviſe; and he flattered his followers with promiſes of ſuch enjoyments in heaven.

But the true ſaint, if he were to contrive ſuch an heaven as would ſuit him beſt, could not contrive one more agreeable to his inclination and deſires, than ſuch an one as is revealed in the word of God; an heaven of the enjoyment of the glorious God, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, where he ſhall have all ſin taken away, and ſhall be perfectly conformed to God, where he ſhall have a perfect acquaintance with God, and ſhall ſpend an eternity in exalted exerciſes of love to God, and in the enjoyment of his love. Such an heaven is to the ſaint better than any Mahometan paradiſe; it is the beſt heaven that can poſſibly be; there is no happineſs conceived of, that would be better, or that would appear ſo deſirable to him, as this. If God were not to be enjoyed in heaven, but, inſtead of that, there were vaſt wealth, immenſe treaſures of ſilver and gold, and great honour of ſuch kind as men obtain in this world, and a fulneſs of the greateſt ſenſual delights and pleaſures; all theſe things would not make up for the want of God and Chriſt, and the enjoyment of them there. If it were empty of God, it would indeed be an empty melancholy place.

The godly have been made ſenſible, as to all creature-enjoyments, that they cannot ſatisfy the ſoul, and that happineſs is in God; and therefore nothing will content them but God. Offer a ſaint what you will, if you deny him God, he will eſteem himſelf miſerable. His ſoul thirſts for God, to come and appear before God. God is the centre of his deſires; and as long as you keep his ſoul from its proper centre, it will not be at reſt. The true ſaint ſets his heart on God as the chief good.

II. It

II. It is the ſpirit of a godly man to prefer God before all other things on the earth.

1. The ſaint prefers that enjoyment of God, for which he hopes hereafter, to any thing in this world. He looketh not at the things which are ſeen, and are temporal, ſo much as at thoſe things which are unſeen and eternal, 1 Cor. iv. 18. It is but a little of God that the ſaint enjoys here in this world; he hath but a little acquaintance with God, and enjoys but a little of the manifeſtations of the divine glory and love. But God hath promiſed to give him himſelf hereafter in a full enjoyment. And theſe promiſes of God are more precious to the ſaint, than the moſt precious earthly jewels. The goſpel which contains theſe promiſes, doth therein contain greater treaſures, in his eſteem, than the cabinets of princes, or the mines of the Indies.

2. The ſaints prefer what of God may be obtained in this world before all things in the world They not only prefer thoſe glorious degrees of the enjoyment of God which are promiſed hereafter, before any thing in this world; but even ſuch degrees as may be attained to here in the preſent ſtate, though they are immenſely ſhort of what is to be enjoyed in heaven. There is a great difference in the ſpiritual attainments of the ſaints in this world. Some attain to much greater acquaintance and communion with God, and conformity to him, than others. But the higheſt attainments are very ſmall in compariſon with what is future.

The ſaints are capable of making progreſs in ſpiritual attainments, and of obtaining more of God than ever yet they have obtained; and they are of ſuch a ſpirit that they earneſtly deſire ſuch further attainments. Not contented with thoſe degrees to which they have already attained, they hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs, and, as new-born babes, deſire the ſincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. It is their deſire, to know more of God, to have more of his image, and to be enabled more to imitate God and Chriſt in their walk and converſation. The appetite of the ſoul of a godly man is after God and Jeſus Chriſt, as appears by many places of ſcripture; as Pſal. xxvii. 4. "One thing have I deſired of the Lord, that will "I ſeek after, that I may dwell in the houſe of the Lord "all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, "and to inquire in his temple." Pſal. xlii. 1. 2. "As the "hart panteth after the water-brooks, ſo panteth my ſoul "after thee, O God. My ſoul thirſteth for God, for the "living God: when ſhall I come and appear before God?"

Pſal.

Pſal. lxiii. 1. 2. " O God, thou art my God, early will I " ſeek thee: my ſoul thirſteth for thee, my fleſh longeth " for thee in a dry and thirſty land, where no water is; to " ſee thy power and thy glory, ſo as I have ſeen thee in the " ſanctuary." See alſo, Pſal. lxxxiv. 1. 2. 3. and Pſal. cxxx. 6. " My ſoul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that " watch for the morning; I ſay, more than they that watch " for the morning."

Though every ſaint has not this longing deſire after God to the ſame degree that the Pſalmiſt had, yet they are all of the ſame ſpirit; they have a ſpirit earneſtly to deſire and long for more of God, to be nearer to him, to have more of his preſence and of the light of his countenance, and to have more of God in their hearts. That this is the ſpirit of the godly in general, and not only of ſome particular ſaints, appears from Iſa. xxvi. 8. 9. where not any particular ſaint, but the church in general ſpeaks thus: " Yea, " in the way of thy judgements, O Lord, have we waited " for thee; the deſire of our ſoul is to thy name, and to " the remembrance of thee. With my ſoul have I deſired " thee in the night, and with my ſpirit within me will I " ſeek thee early."

It appears alſo to be the ſpirit of the ſaints in general, by ſome expreſſions of the ſpouſe or the church in the Canticle; as chap. iii. 1. 2. " By night on my bed I ſought him " whom my ſoul loveth; I ſought him, but I found him " not. I will riſe now, and go about the city; in the " ſtreets and broad ways I will ſeek him whom my ſoul " loveth." So, chap. v. 6. 8. " I ſought him, but I could not " find him; I called him, but he gave me no anſwer. I " charge you, O daughters of Jeruſalem, if ye find my " beloved, that ye tell him, that I am ſick of love."

The ſaints are not always in the lively exerciſe of ſuch a ſpirit: but ſuch a ſpirit they have, and ſometimes they have the ſenſible exerciſe of it: they have a ſpirit to deſire God and divine attainments, more than all earthly things. They deſire and ſeek to be rich in grace, more than they do to get earthly riches. They ſeek and deſire the honour which is of God, more than that which is of men, John v. 44. They deſire communion with God, more than any earthly pleaſures whatſoever. They are in ſome meaſure of the ſame ſpirit which the apoſtle expreſſes in Phil. iii. 8. " Yea, " doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs, for the excellen- " cy of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus, my Lord, and do " count them but dung that I may win Chriſt."

3. The

3. The ſaint prefers *what he hath already of God* before any thing in this world. That which was infuſed into his heart at his converſion, is more precious to him than any thing which the world can afford. The knowledge and acquaintance which he hath with God, though it be but little, he would not part with for any thing that the world can afford. The views which are ſometimes given him of the beauty and excellency of God, are more precious to him than all the treaſures of the wicked. The relation of a child in which he ſtands to God, the union which there is between his ſoul and Jeſus Chriſt, he values more than the greateſt earthly dignity: he had rather have this, than to be the child of a prince. He would not part with the honour which God hath been pleaſed to put on him by bringing him ſo near to him, to be ſet upon an earthly throne, or to wear an earthly crown, though it were the moſt ſplendid that ever was worn by any earthly potentate.

That image of God which is inſtamped on his ſoul, he values more than any earthly ornaments. It is, in his eſteem, better to be adorned with the graces of God's Holy Spirit, than to be made to ſhine in jewels of gold, and the moſt coſtly pearls, or to be admired for the greateſt external beauty. He values the robe of the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, which he hath on his ſoul, more than the robes of princes The ſpiritual pleaſures and delights which he ſometimes has in God, he prefers far before all the pleaſures of ſin, Pſal lxxxiv. 10. "A day in thy courts is better "than a thouſand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the "houſe of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedneſs."

A ſaint thus prefers God before all other things in this world,

1. As he prefers God before any thing elſe that he *poſſeſſes* in the world. Whatever temporal enjoyments he has, he prefers God to them all. If he have pleaſant earthly accommodations; yet it is with reſpect to God, and not his earthly accommodations, that he ſaith, as in Pſal. xvi. 5. 6. "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my "cup: thou maintaineſt my lot. The lines are fallen to "me in pleaſant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." If he be rich, yet he chiefly ſets his heart not on his earthly, but his heavenly riches. He prefers God before any earthly friend, and the favour of God before any reſpect that is ſhown him by his fellow-creatures.

Although a godly man may have many earthly enjoyments, yet

yet in his heart he ſets God above them all. Although he may give theſe room in his heart, and too much room; yet he reſerves the throne for God; Luke xiv. 26. "If any "man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, "and wife, and children, and brethren, and ſiſters, yea, and "his own life alſo, he cannot be my diſciple."

2. He prefers God before any earthly enjoyment of which he *hath a proſpect.* The children of men commonly ſet their hearts more on ſome earthly happineſs for which they hope, and after which they are ſeeking, than on what they have in preſent poſſeſſion. They very much live upon vain hopes of happineſs in earthly things, an happineſs which they imagine is to be obtained by and by. But a godly man prefers God to any thing which he has in proſpect, or is ſeeking in the world. He may, indeed, through the prevalence of corruption, for a ſeaſon be carried away and ſwallowed up, with ſome enjoyment which he is purſuing: however, he will again come to himſelf; this is not the temper of the man; he is of another ſpirit.

3. It is the ſpirit of a godly man to prefer God to any earthly enjoyment of which he can conceive. He not only prefers him to any thing which he now poſſeſſes; but he ſees nothing poſſeſſed by any of his neighbours, or any of his fellow creatures, that he has ſuch an eſteem of, as he has of God. If he could have as much worldly proſperity as he would, if he could have earthly things juſt to his mind, and agreeable to his inclination; he values the portion which he has in God, above ſuch a portion as this: he prefers Chriſt to earthly kingdoms.

APPLICATION.

1. Hence we may learn, that whatever changes a godly man paſſes through, he is happy; becauſe God, who is unchangeable, is his choſen portion. If he meet with temporal loſſes, and be deprived of many of his temporal enjoyments, or of all of them; yet God, whom he prefers before all thoſe things which he hath loſt, ſtill remains, and cannot be loſt. While he ſtays here in this changeable, troubleſome world, yet he is happy, becauſe his choſen portion, on which he builds as his main foundation for happineſs, is above the world, and above all changes. And if he die and go into another world, ſtill he is happy, becauſe that por-

tion, which he prefers to all that is either in this or another world, yet remains. Whatever he be deprived of, he cannot be deprived of his chief portion; his inheritance remains ſure to him.

If worldly-minded men could find out a way to ſecure to themſelves ſome certain earthly enjoyments, on which they mainly ſet their hearts, ſo that they could not be loſt nor impaired while they live, how great would they account the privilege, though other things which they eſteem in a leſs degree were liable to the ſame uncertainty as they now are? Whereas now, thoſe earthly enjoyments, on which men chiefly ſet their hearts, are often moſt fading. But how great is the happineſs of thoſe who have choſen the Fountain of all good, and prefer him before all things in heaven or on earth, as they can never be deprived of him to all eternity!

2. Let all by theſe things examine and try themſelves, whether they be ſaints or not. As this which hath been exhibited is the ſpirit of the ſaints, ſo it is peculiar to them: none can uſe the language of the text, and ſay, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee*, but the ſaints. A man's choice is that which determines his ſtate. He that chuſes God for his portion, and prefers him to all other things, is a godly man, for *he* chuſes and worſhips God as God To reſpect God as God, is to reſpect him above all other things; and if any man reſpect God as his God, his God he is; there is an union and covenant-relation between that man and the true God.

Every man is as his God is. If you would know what a man is, whether he be a godly man or not, you muſt inquire what his God is? If the true God be he whom he reſpects as his God, i.e. to whom he hath a ſupreme reſpect, and whom he regards above all; he is doubtleſs a godly man, a ſervant of the true God. But if the man have ſome other god, ſomething elſe to which he pays a greater reſpect than to Jehovah, he is not a godly man; God is not his God; he doth not worſhip him for his God, nor doth he belong to God, as one of his people.

Inquire, therefore, how it is with you, whether you prefer God before all other things. It may ſometimes be ſome difficulty for perſons to determine this to their ſatisfaction; the ungodly may be deluded with falſe affections; the godly in dull frames may be at a loſs about it. Therefore you may try yourſelves as to this matter theſe ſeveral ways; if you

you cannot ſpeak fully to one thing, yet you may perhaps to others.

(1.) What is it which chiefly makes you deſire to go to heaven when you die? Indeed ſome have no great deſire to go to heaven. They do not care to go to hell; but if they could but be ſafe from that, they would not much concern themſelves about heaven. If it be not ſo with you, but you find that you have a deſire to go to heaven, then inquire what it is for. Is the main reaſon, that you may be with God, have communion with him, and be conformed to him? that you may ſee God, and enjoy him there? Is the conſideration that theſe things are to be had in heaven, that which keeps your heart, and your deſires, and your expectations towards heaven?

(2.) If you could avoid death, and might have your free choice, would you chuſe to live always in this world without God, rather than in God's time to leave the world, in order to be with God in the full enjoyment of him? If you might live here in earthly proſperity to all eternity, but deſtitute of the preſence of God and communion with him, having no ſpiritual divine intercourſe between God and your ſouls, God and you being ſtrangers to each other for ever; would you chuſe this rather than to leave the world, in order to go and dwell in God's houſe in heaven, as the children of God, there to enjoy the glorious privileges of children, in an acquaintance with God, in an holy and perfect love to God, and enjoyment of him to all eternity?

(3.) Do you prefer Chriſt to all others as the way to heaven? He who chuſes God, and prefers him, as hath been ſpoken of, he prefers him in each perſon of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt; the Father, as his Father; the Son, as his Saviour; the Holy Ghoſt, as his Sanctifier. Inquire, therefore, not only whether you chuſe the enjoyment of God in heaven as your higheſt portion and happineſs, but alſo whether you chuſe Jeſus Chriſt before all others, as your way to heaven; and that in a ſenſe of the excellency of Chriſt, and of the way of ſalvation by him, as being that which is to the glory of Chriſt, and to the glory of ſovereign grace. Is the way of free grace, by the blood and righteouſneſs of the bleſſed and glorious Redeemer, the moſt excellent way to life in your eſteem? Doth it add a value to the heavenly inheritance, that it is conferred in this way? Is this far better to you than to be ſaved by

your own righteouſneſs, by any of your own performances, or by any other mediator?

(4.) If you might go to heaven in what courſe you pleaſe, would you prefer to all others the way of a ſtrict walk with God? They that prefer God as hath been repreſented, chuſe God, as you have heard, not only hereafter, but here; they chuſe and prefer him, not only in the end, but in the way. They had rather be with God than with any other, when they come to the end of their journey; and not only ſo, but they had rather have God with them than any other, while they are in the way thither. Their choſen way of going to heaven is a way of ſtrict walking with God. They would neither fail of coming to God in the end, nor would they depart from God by the way. They chuſe the way of walking with God, though it be a way of labour, and care, and ſelf-denial, rather than a way of ſin, though it be a way of ſloth, and of gratifying their luſts.

(5.) If it were ſo, that you were to ſpend your eternity here in this world, would you chuſe rather to live in mean and low circumſtances with the gracious preſence of God, than to live for ever in earthly proſperity without God in the world? If you were to ſpend your eternity in this world, would you rather ſpend it in a way of holy living, in ſerving and walking with God, and in the enjoyment of the privileges of the children of God, having God often manifeſting himſelf to you as your Father, diſcovering to you his glory, and manifeſting his love, lifting the light of his countenance upon you, as God often doth to his ſaints in this world; would you rather chuſe theſe things, though you ſhould live in poverty, and with but little of the good things of this world, than to abound in a fulneſs of worldly things, and to live in eaſe and proſperity, at the ſame time being an alien from the commonwealth of Iſrael, ſtanding in no child-like relation to God, enjoying no gracious intercourſe with him, having no right in God, either to have him for your God, or to be acknowledged by him as his children? Or would ſuch a life as this, though in ever ſo great earthly proſperity, be eſteemed by you a miſerable life?

If, after all this, there remain with you doubts, and a difficulty to determine concerning yourſelves whether you do truly and ſincerely prefer God to all other things, I would mention two things which are the ſureſt ways to be determined in this matter, and which ſeem to be the beſt grounds of ſatisfaction in it.

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1. The feeling of ſome particular, ſtrong, and lively exerciſes of ſuch a ſpirit. A perſon may have ſuch a ſpirit as is ſpoken of in the doctrine, and may have the exerciſe of it in a low degree, and yet remain in doubt whether he have it or not, and be unable, by all his ſelf examination, to come to a ſatisfying determination. But God is pleaſed at ſome times to give to ſome of his people, ſuch lively and ſtrong exerciſes of ſuch a ſpirit, and they ſee it ſo clearly, and feel it ſo plainly, that it puts it, at leaſt for the preſent, out of doubt. They obtain ſuch diſcoveries of the glory of God, and of the excellency of Chriſt, as do ſo draw forth the heart, that they know beyond all doubt or queſtion, that they feel ſuch a ſpirit as Paul ſpake of, when he ſaid, "He counted all "things but loſs, for the excellency of Chriſt Jeſus his Lord;" and they can boldly ſay, as in the text, "Whom have I in "heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I "deſire beſides thee." At ſuch times the people of God do not need any help of miniſters to ſatisfy them whether they have the true love of God; they plainly ſee and feel it; and the Spirit of God then witneſſeth with their ſpirits, that they are the children of God.

Therefore, if you would be ſatisfied upon this point, earneſtly ſeek ſuch attainments; ſeek that you may have ſuch clear and lively exerciſes of this ſpirit. To this end, you muſt preſs forward, and labour to grow in grace. If you have had ſuch experiences in times paſt, and they ſatisfied you then, yet you may again doubt. You ſhould therefore ſeek that you may have them more frequently; and the way to that is, earneſtly to preſs forward, that you may have more acquaintance with God, and have the principles of grace ſtrengthened. This is the way to have the exerciſes of grace ſtronger, more lively, and more frequent, and ſo to be ſatisfied that you have a ſpirit of ſupreme love to God.

2. The other way is, To inquire whether you prefer God to all other things in practice, i. e. whether, when you have occaſion in the courſe of your life to manifeſt by your practice which you prefer, when you muſt either cleave to one or the other, and muſt either forſake other things, or forſake God; whether then it be your manner practically to prefer God to all other things whatever, even to your deareſt earthly enjoyments, to thoſe earthly things to which your hearts are moſt wedded. Do you lead ſuch lives as this? Are your lives, lives of adherence to God, and of ſerving God in this manner?

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He that doth ſincerely prefer God to all other things in his heart, he will do it in his practice. For when God and all other things come to ſtand in competition, that is the proper trial what a man chuſes; and the manner of acting in ſuch caſes muſt certainly determine what the choice is in all free agents, or thoſe who act on choice. Therefore there is no ſign of ſincerity ſo much inſiſted on in the Bible as this, that we deny ourſelves, ſell all, forſake the world, take up the croſs, and follow Chriſt whitherſoever he goeth.

Therefore, ſo run, not as uncertainly; ſo fight, not as thoſe that beat the air; but keep under your bodies, and bring them into ſubjection. Act not as though you counted yourſelves to have apprehended; but this one thing do, "forgetting thoſe things which are behind, and reaching "forth unto thoſe things which are before, preſs toward "the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in "Chriſt Jeſus." 2 Pet. i. 5 &c. "And beſides this, gi-"ving diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, "knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to tem-"perance, patience; and to patience, godlineſs; and to "godlineſs, brotherly kindneſs; and to brotherly kind-"neſs, charity. For if theſe things be in you, and a-"bound, they make you that ye ſhall neither be barren "nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jeſus "Chriſt."

SER-

SERMON IV*.

The ſole conſideration, that *God is God*, ſufficient to ſtill all objections to his Sovereignty.

PSALM, xlvi. 10.

Be ſtill, and know that I am God.

THIS pſalm ſeems to be a ſong of the church in a time of great revolutions and deſolations in the world. Therefore the church, in the beginning of this pſalm, glories in God as her refuge, and ſtrength, and preſent help, even in times of the greateſt troubles and overturnings, verſ. 1. 2. 3. "God is our refuge and ſtrength, a very pre-"ſent help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though "the earth be removed, and though the mountains be car-"ried into the midſt of the ſea; though the waters there-"of roar and be troubled, though the mountains ſhake "with the ſwelling thereof." The church makes her boaſt of God, not only as being her help, by defending her from the deſolations and calamities in which the reſt of the world were involved, but alſo by ſupplying her, as a never-failing fountain or river, with refreſhment, comfort, and joy, in the times of public calamities. See verſ. 4. 5. "There is a "river, the ſtreams whereof ſhall make glad the city of "God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Moſt High. "God is in the midſt of her; ſhe ſhall not be moved: God "ſhall help her, and that right early."

In the 7th and 11th verſes is again ſet forth, what a refuge God is for his people in ſuch a time. In the 6th and 8th are ſet forth the terrible changes and calamities which there were in the world: "The Heathen raged, the king-"doms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melt-"ed. Come, behold the works of God, what deſolations

* Dated June 1735.

"he

" he hath made in the earth." In the verſe preceding the text is elegantly ſet forth the manner in which God delivers the church from theſe calamities, and eſpecially from the deſolations of war, and the rage of their enemies: " He " maketh wars to ceaſe unto the end of the earth; he break- " eth the bow, and cutteth the ſpear in ſunder; he burn- " eth the chariot in the fire;" i. e. he maketh wars to ceaſe when they are againſt his people; he breaketh the bow when bent againſt his ſaints.

Then follow the words of the text: " Be ſtill, and know " that I am God." The great works of God, wherein his ſovereignty appeared, had been deſcribed in the foregoing verſes. In the awful deſolations that he made, and by delivering his people by terrible things, he ſhowed his greatneſs and dominion. Herein he manifeſted the power and ſovereignty of a God, and ſo commands all *to be ſtill, and know that he is God.* For, ſays he, as it follows, " I will " be exalted among the Heathen; I will be exalted in the " earth."

In the words may be obſerved,

1. A duty preſcribed, to be ſtill before God, and under the diſpenſations of his providence; which implies ſeveral things: (1.) We muſt be ſtill as to *words*; ſtill from ſpeaking, from murmuring againſt the ſovereign diſpenſations of Providence, and from complaining of them; ſtill from darkening counſel by words without knowledge, from juſtifying ourſelves, and ſpeaking great ſwelling words of vanity. (2.) We muſt be ſtill as to *actions* and outward behaviour, ſo as not to oppoſe God in his diſpenſations. (3.) We muſt be ſtill in *the inward frame of our hearts*, with a calm and quiet ſubmiſſion of ſoul to the ſovereign pleaſure of God, whatever it be, in no wiſe inwardly quarrelling or finding fault with God.

2. We may obſerve the ground of this duty, viz. *the divinity of God.* His being God is ſufficient reaſon why we ſhould be ſtill before him, in no wiſe murmuring, or objecting, or oppoſing, but calmly and humbly ſubmitting to him.

3. How we muſt fulfil this duty, how we muſt be ſtill before God, viz. with a ſenſe of God's divinity, as ſeeing the ground of this duty, in that we ſee and know him to be God, and ſo that he is worthy to be in all things abſolutely ſubmitted to. Our ſubmiſſion is to be ſuch as becomes rational creatures. God doth not require us to ſubmit contrary

trary to reaſon, but to ſubmit as ſeeing the reaſon and ground of ſubmiſſion in his divinity.

DOCTRINE. The bare conſideration *that God is God*, may well be enough to ſtill all objections and oppoſition againſt the divine ſovereign diſpenſations.

This may appear by the following things.

1. In that he is God, he is an abſolutely and infinitely perfect being; and it is impoſſible that he ſhould do amiſs. As he is eternal, and receives not his exiſtence from any other, but exiſts of himſelf, he cannot be limited in his being, or any attribute, to any certain determinate quantity; for ſuch a limitation neceſſarily ſuppoſes a cauſe why he is juſt ſo great, and no greater. If any thing have bounds fixed to it, there muſt be ſome cauſe or reaſon why thoſe bounds are fixed juſt where they are, and not further nor nearer. Whence it will follow, that every limited thing muſt have ſome cauſe; and therefore that that being which has no cauſe muſt be unlimited.

It is moſt evident by the works of God, that his perfections are infinite, that his underſtanding and power are infinite; for he that hath made all things out of nothing, and upholds, and governs, and manages all things every day, and every moment, in all ages, without growing weary, muſt be of infinite power. He muſt alſo be of infinite knowledge; for if he made all things, and upholds and governs all things continually, it will follow, that he knows and perfectly ſees all things, great and ſmall, in heaven and earth, continually at one view; which cannot be without infinite underſtanding.

Being thus infinite in underſtanding and power, he muſt alſo be perfectly holy; for unholineſs always argues ſome defect, ſome weakneſs, and ſome blindneſs. Where there is no darkneſs or deluſion, there can be no unholineſs. It is impoſſible that wickedneſs ſhould conſiſt with infinite light. God being infinite in power and knowledge, he muſt be ſelf-ſufficient and all-ſufficient; therefore it is impoſſible that he ſhould be under any temptation to do any thing amiſs; for he can have no end in doing it. When any are tempted to do amiſs, it is for ſelfiſh ends. But how can an all-ſufficient Being, who wants nothing, and cannot be deceived to think he wants any thing, be tempted to do evil for ſelfiſh ends? So that God is eſſentially holy, and nothing is more impoſſible than that God ſhould do amiſs:

therefore to ſuppoſe that God does amiſs, we muſt in order to it ſuppoſe him not to be God; we muſt perfectly aboliſh his godhead.

2. As he is God, he is ſo great, that he is infinitely above all comprehenſion; and therefore it is unreaſonable in us to quarrel with his diſpenſations, becauſe they are myſterious. If God is God, then he is infinitely above us, and above our reach. If he were a being that we could comprehend, he would not be God. It would be exceedingly unreaſonable to ſuppoſe any other, than that there ſhould be many things in the nature of God, and in his works and government, to us myſterious, and which we never can fully find out. It is neceſſary that it ſhould be ſo, and it is fit that it ſhould be ſo.

What are we? and what do we make of ourſelves, when we expect that God and his ways ſhould be upon a level with our underſtandings? We are infinitely unequal to any ſuch thing, as comprehending God. We may leſs unreaſonably expect that a nut-ſhell ſhould contain the ocean: Job, xi. 7. "Canſt thou by ſearching find out God? canſt thou "find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as "heaven, what canſt thou do? deeper than hell, what "canſt thou know? The meaſure thereof is longer than "the earth, and broader than the ſea." If we were ſenſible of the diſtance which there is between God and us, we ſhould ſee the reaſonableneſs of that interrogation of the apoſtle, Rom. ix. 20. "Who art thou, O man, that replieſt "againſt God?"

If we find fault with God's government, we virtually ſuppoſe ourſelves fit to be God's counſellors; whereas it becomes us rather, with great humility and adoration, to cry out with the apoſtle, Rom. ix. 33. "O the depth of the "riches, both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! "How unſearchable are his judgements, and his ways paſt "finding out! For who hath known the mind of the "Lord? or who hath been his counſellor? or who hath "firſt given to him, and it ſhall be recompenſed unto him "again? For of him, and through him, and to him are "all things: to whom be glory for ever." If little children ſhould riſe up and find fault with the ſupreme legiſlature of a nation, or quarrel with the myſterious adminiſtrations of the ſovereign, would it not be looked upon that they meddled with things too high for them? But what are we but babes? Our underſtandings are infinitely leſs than thoſe of babes, in compariſon with the wiſdom of God.

It

It becomes us therefore to be ſenſible of it, and to behave ourſelves accordingly. Pſal. cxxxi 1. 2. "Lord, my heart "is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exer- "ciſe myſelf in great matters, nor things that are too high "for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myſelf as a "child."

This conſideration alone of the infinite diſtance between God and us, and between God's underſtanding and our's, ſhould be enough to ſtill and quiet us concerning all that God does, however myſterious and unintelligible to us.—Nor have we any right to expect, that God ſhould particularly explain to us the reaſon of his diſpenſations. It is fit that God ſhould not give any account of his matters to us, his creatures, and worms of the duſt, that we may be ſenſible of our diſtance from him, and adore and ſubmit to him in humble reverence.

Therefore we find, that when Job was ſo full of difficulty and objections againſt God's diſpenſations, when God came to anſwer him, he did not anſwer him by giving him an account, and by particularly explaining the reaſons of his myſterious providence; but by ſhowing him what a poor worm, what a nothing he was, and how much he himſelf was above him. This much more became God than it would have done, to enter into a particular debate with Job, arguing with him, to unfold the difficulties which came in his way. It became Job to ſubmit to God in thoſe things that he could not underſtand, and the reply of God to Job tended to bring him to this. It is fit that as to us God ſhould dwell in thick darkneſs, or in light which no man can approach unto, which no man hath ſeen, nor can ſee. No wonder that a God of infinite glory ſhines with a brightneſs too ſtrong and mighty for mortal eyes. For the angels themſelves, thoſe mighty ſpirits, are repreſented as covering their faces in this light; Iſa. vi. at the beginning.

3. As God is God, all things are his own, and he hath a right to diſpoſe of them according to his own pleaſure. All things in this lower world are his; Job. xli. 11. "Whatſoever is under the whole heaven is mine." Yea the whole "univerſe is God's; Deut. x. 14. "Behold the heaven, "and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's; the earth alſo "with all that is therein." All things are his, becauſe all things are from him; all are derived from him; they have their being from him; they are wholly from him, and from him alone. Thoſe things which are made by men, are not wholly from them. When man builds an houſe, it is not

wholly from him: nothing of which the houſe is made, has its being from him. But all creatures are wholly and entirely from God. All things are the fruits of God's power, and therefore it is fit that they ſhould be ſubject to God's pleaſure, and that they ſhould be for his pleaſure.

All things were from God at firſt, and they are from him every moment. He made them, and he upholds them; "God hath made all things for himſelf;" Prov. xvi. 4.—As all things are from God, ſo they are by God, are upheld in being by him, and would ſink into nothing in a moment, if he did not uphold them. And all things are *to* him. Rom. x. 36. "For of him, and through him, and *to* him "are all things." Col. i. 16. 17 "For by him were all "things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, "viſible and inviſible, whether they be thrones or domi-"nions, principalities or powers, all things were created "by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by "him all things conſiſt" All mankind are his, their lives, and breath, and being are his; "for in him we live, and "move, and have our being." Our ſouls are his, he hath made them, all their faculties and capacities are from him. Ezek. xviii. 4. "All ſouls are mine: as the ſoul of the fa-"ther, ſo alſo the ſoul of the ſon, is mine."

4. God in that he is God, is worthy to be ſovereign over all things. Sometimes men are the owners of more than they are worthy of: they have the right of the diſpoſal of more than they are well fit to diſpoſe of: they are not well qualified or capacitated for it. But God is not only the owner of the whole world, as all is from him, and dependent on him; but ſuch is his perfection, and the excellency and dignity of his nature, that he is worthy of the ſovereignty over all. No man ought in the temper of his mind to be oppoſite to God's exerciſing the ſovereignty of the univerſe, as if he were not worthy of it, for to be the abſolute ſovereign of the univerſe is not a glory or dignity too great for God. He is altogether worthy of it; for he is infinitely great, and clothed with infinite majeſty. His eſſential exaltation above the creatures, is as great as the relative exaltation of being abſolute ſovereign over the creatures.—For all things in heaven and earth, angels and men, are nothing in compariſon with him: all are as the drop of the bucket, and as the light duſt of the balance. It is therefore fit that every thing ſhould be in his hands, to be diſpoſed of according to his pleaſure.

So

So great is God, and ſo much above creatures, that his will and pleaſure are of the greateſt importance, of infinitely greater importance than the will of creatures. It is fit that his will ſhould take place, though contrary to the will of all other beings. So great is God, that his glory is to be eſteemed a thing of the higheſt importance above all other things. It is a proper thing that God ſhould make himſelf his own end: it is fit that he ſhould make and order all things for himſelf, as he does. God is worthy to be ſovereign in things of the greateſt importance, and even in the affair of the eternal welfare of reaſonable creatures.

God is poſſeſſed of ſuch perfections and excellencies as to quality him to be the abſolute ſovereign of the world.—He has infinite wiſdom to qualify him. Certainly it is more fit that all things be under the guidance of a perfect, unerring wiſdom, than that they ſhould be left to themſelves to fall out in confuſion, by mere chance, or be brought to paſs by blind cauſes. Yea it muſt be more fit that even the behaviour of moral agents, on which their eternal welfare depends, ſhould be over-ruled and ordered by infinite wiſdom, than that they ſhould be left to fall out one way or the other, juſt as ſhall happen. It is not fit that *any* affairs within the government of God ſhould be left without the direction of his wiſe providence; leaſt of all, things of the greateſt importance.

It is abſurd to ſuppoſe, that God is obliged to keep every creature from ſinning and expoſing himſelf to an adequate puniſhment. For if ſo, then it will follow, that there can be no ſuch thing as a moral government of God over reaſonable creatures; and it would be an abſurdity for God to give commands; for he himſelf is the party bound to ſee to the performance, and there can be no uſe of promiſes or threatenings. But if God may leave a creature to ſin and to expoſe himſelf to puniſhment, then it is much fitter and better that the matter ſhould be ordered by wiſdom, who ſhould juſtly lie expoſed by ſin to puniſhment, and who not; than that it be left to come to paſs by confuſed chance. It is unworthy of the Governor of the world to leave things to chance; it belongs to him to govern all things by wiſdom.

As God has wiſdom to qualify him to be ſovereign, ſo he has power alſo to enable him to execute the determinations of wiſdom. And he is eſſentially and invariably holy and righteous, and infinitely good: whereby he is qualified to govern the world in the beſt manner.

Therefore

Therefore when he acts as ſovereign of the world, it is fit that we ſhould be ſtill, and willingly ſubmit, and in no wiſe oppoſe his having the glory of his ſovereignty; but ſhould, in a ſenſe of his worthineſs of it, chearfully aſcribe it to him, and ſay, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, "and the glory for ever;" and ſay with thoſe in Rev. v. 13. "Bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power be to "him that ſitteth on the throne."

5. God, in that he is God, *will* be ſovereign, and *will* act as ſuch. As he is able to do what he pleaſes, ſo he will do what he pleaſes. He ſits on the throne of his ſovereignty, and hath ſo done from the beginning of the world. He hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all. He will be exalted in his ſovereign power and dominion, as in the verſe of the text, "I will be ex-"alted among the Heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." He will have all men to know, that he is moſt high over all the earth. He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven and amongſt the inhabitants of the earth, and none can ſtay his hand.

There is no ſuch thing as fruſtrating, or baffling, or undermining his deſigns; for he is the great and mighty God, great in counſel and wonderful in working. His counſel ſhall ſtand, and he will do all his pleaſure. There is no wiſdom, nor underſtanding, nor counſel againſt the Lord: whatſoever God doth, it ſhall be for ever; nothing ſhall be put to it, nor any thing taken from it. He will work, and who ſhall let it? He is able to daſh in pieces the enemy. If men join hand in hand, and engage againſt him, to hinder or oppoſe his deſigns, he breaks the bow, he cuts the ſpear in ſunder, he burneth the chariot in the fire.——He kills, and he makes alive, he brings down and raiſes up juſt as he pleaſes. Iſa. xlv. 6. 7. "That they may know from the ri-"ſing of the ſun, and from the weſt, that there is none "beſides me. I am the Lord, and there is none elſe: I "form the light, and create darkneſs; I make peace and "create evil; I the Lord do all theſe things."

Great men, and rich men, and wiſe men cannot hinder God from doing his pleaſure. He leadeth counſellors away ſpoiled, he accepteth not the perſons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor. There are many devices in man's heart, but the counſel of the Lord that ſhall ſtand, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations.—When he gives quietneſs, who can make trouble? When he hides his face, who can behold him? He breaketh down,

and

and it cannot be built up again: he ſhutteth up a man, and there can be no opening: when he purpoſeth, who ſhall diſannul it? And when his hand is ſtretched out, who ſhall turn it back? — So there is no hindering God from being ſovereign, and acting as ſuch. "He hath mercy on whom "he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." He hath the keys of hell and of death: he openeth, and no man ſhutteth: he ſhutteth, and no man openeth. This may ſhow us the folly of oppoſing ourſelves againſt the ſovereign diſpenſations of God; and how much more wiſely they act, who quietly and ſweetly ſubmit to his ſovereign will.

6. God in that he is God, is able to avenge himſelf of thoſe who oppoſe his ſovereignty. He is wiſe of heart, and mighty in ſtrength: who hath hardened himſelf againſt him and proſpered! He that will contend with God muſt anſwer it. And what a poor creature is man to fight againſt God! Is he able to make his part good with him? Whoever of God's enemies deal proudly, God will ſhow that he is above them. They will be but as the chaff before the whirlwind, and ſhall be as the fat of lambs; they ſhall conſume into ſmoke, they ſhall conſume away. "Who would "ſet the briers and thorns againſt him in battle? He "would go through them, he would burn them together." Iſa. xxvii. 4.

APPLICATION.

A manifold improvement might be made of this doctrine, which our own reflections may ſuggeſt to each of us. But the improvement which I ſhall at this time make of it, ſhall be only in an *uſe of reproof* to ſuch under convictions of ſin, and fears of hell, as are not ſtill, but oppoſe the ſovereignty of God in the diſpoſals of his grace. This doctrine ſhows the unreaſonableneſs, and dreadful wickedneſs, of your refuſing heartily to own the ſovereignty of God in this matter. It ſhows that you know not *that God is God.* If you knew that he is God, you would be ſtill and quiet You would not only be outwardly ſtill, and not dare to riſe up againſt the ſovereignty of God; but you would be inwardly ſtill; you would humbly and calmly lie in the duſt before a ſovereign God, and would ſee the reaſon why you ſhould ſo do.

In objecting and quarreling about the righteouſneſs of God's laws and threatnings, and his ſovereign diſpenſations towards

towards you and others, you oppoſe the divinity of God, you *ungod* him, you deny him to be God, you ſhow that you are ignorant of his divine greatneſs and excellency, and that you cannot bear that he ſhould have divine honour. It is from low, mean thoughts of God, that you do in your minds oppoſe the ſovereignty of God. It is from low thoughts of God that you dare thus oppoſe the ſovereign dominion of God over his creatures, and that you are not ſenſible how dangerous this your conduct is. It is becauſe you have little thoughts of God, that you are not ſenſible what an audacious thing it is for ſuch a creature as man to ſtrive with his Maker.

It is from little thoughts of God that you think yourſelves big enough to judge and condemn God. It is from low thoughts of God and high thoughts of yourſelves that you do ſo; for herein you ungod the Moſt High, and deify yourſelves, ſet yourſelves on a level with God, and in ſome reſpects above him, as if you were proper perſons to examine and judge of the adminiſtrations of the Governor of the world. It is from little thoughts of God, that you have ſuch high thoughts of yourſelves. If you ſaw what God is, how high he is above all, you would ſee yourſelves to be but poor worms, but a potſherd or broken piece of an earthen veſſel. You would ſee what horrid arrogance it is in you to contend with the Almighty; that you worms ſhould riſe up againſt God, objecting and finding fault with his ways, which are above your comprehenſion.

What poor creatures are you, that you ſhould ſet up yourſelves for judges over the Moſt High; that you ſhould take it upon you to call God to an account; that you ſhould ſay to the great Jehovah, what doſt thou? and that you ſhould paſs ſentence againſt him! If you knew that he is God, you would not act in this manner; but this knowledge would be ſufficient to ſtill and calm you concerning all God's diſpenſations, and you would ſay with Eli, in 1 Sam. iii. 18. "It is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth good in "his ſight."——But here I ſhall be more particular in ſeveral things.

1 It is from mean thoughts of God that you are not convinced that you have by your ſins deſerved God's eternal wrath and curſe. If you knew that God is God, and had any thing of a ſenſe of the infinite majeſty, greatneſs, and holineſs of God, you would ſee ſin to be ſo heinous and dreadful a thing, that you would ſee, that to be caſt into the lake of fire and brimſtone, and there to have no reſt day

day nor night, but to be tormented for ever and ever, is not a puniſhment more than equal to the demerit of ſin.—You would not have ſo good a thought of yourſelves; you would not be ſo clean and pure in your own eyes; you would ſee what vile, unworthy, hell-deſerving creatures you are. If you had not little thoughts of God, and were to conſider how you have ſet yourſelves againſt God, how you have ſlighted him, and made light of his commandments and his threatenings, and deſpiſed his goodneſs and mercy, how often you have diſobeyed, how obſtinate you have been, how your whole lives have been filled up with ſin againſt God; you would not wonder that God threatens to deſtroy you for ever, but would wonder that he hath not done it before now.

If you had not little thoughts of God, you would not find fault with God for not ſetting his love on you, who never exerciſed any love to him. You would not think it unjuſt in God not to ſeek your intereſt and eternal welfare, who never would be perſuaded at all to ſeek his glory: you would not find fault, if Chriſt did not die for you, who never were willing to deny yourſelves for Chriſt. If you had not little thoughts of God, you would not think it unjuſt in God to ſlight you, and diſregard you, poor deſpicable worms, who have ſo often and ſo long made light of God. If you had not mean thoughts of God, you never would think God obliged to beſtow eternal ſalvation upon you, who have never been truly thankful for one mercy which you have already received of him.

What do you think of yourſelves? what great ideas have you of yourſelves? and what thoughts have you of God, that you think he is obliged to do ſo much for you, though you treat him ever ſo ungratefully for the kindneſs which he hath already beſtowed upon you all the days of your lives? It muſt be from little thoughts of God, that you think it unjuſt in God not to regard you when you call upon him; when he hath earneſtly called to you, ſo long and ſo often, and you would not hear, you would not be perſuaded to hearken to him; you regarded him no more than the whiſtling of the wind. What thoughts have you of God, that you think that God is more obliged to hear what you ſay to him, than you are to regard what he ſays to you?

It is from little thoughts of God, that you think that God is obliged to ſhow mercy to you when you ſeek it, though you have been for a long time wilfully ſinning a-

gainſt him, and provoking him to anger, by preſumption on his mercy, preſuming that he would ſhow you mercy when you ſhould ſeek it. What kind of thoughts have you of God, that you think God is obliged, as it were, to yield himſelf up to be abuſed by men, ſo that when they have done, his mercy and pardoning grace ſhall not be in his own power, but he muſt be obliged to diſpenſe them at their call! If ſinners knew that God is God, they would not entertain any murmuring thoughts againſt the juſtice of the puniſhment which he hath threatened; they could not but ſee that they have deſerved it.

2. It is from little thoughts of God, that you quarrel againſt the juſtice of God, in the condemnation of ſinners, from the doctrines of the divine decrees and original ſin. It muſt be becauſe you do not know God to be God, and will not allow him to be ſovereign. It is for want of a ſenſe how much God is above you, that thoſe things in God which are above your comprehenſion are ſuch difficulties and ſtumbling blocks to you: it is for want of a ſenſe how much the wiſdom and underſtanding of God are above yours, and what poor, ſhort-ſighted, blind creatures you are, in compariſon with him. If you were ſenſible what God is, you would ſee it moſt reaſonable to expect that God and his ways ſhould be far above the reaſon of man, and that it is not to be wondered at, that God dwells in light that no man can approach unto, which no man hath ſeen, nor can ſee.

If men were ſenſible that God is God, and how excellent and perfect a Being he is, they would not be ſo apt to be jealous of him, and to ſuſpect him in things which lie beyond their underſtandings. It would be no difficulty with them to truſt God out of ſight. Such horrid arrogance in worms of the duſt, that they ſhould think that they have wiſdom enough to examine and determine concerning what God doth, and to paſs ſentence on it as unjuſt, is from little thoughts of God

If you were ſenſible how great and glorious a Being God is, it would not be ſuch a difficulty with you to allow God the dignity of ſuch abſolute ſovereignty, as that he ſhould abſolutely decree whatſoever comes to paſs, and that he ſhould order as he pleaſes even in ſuch an affair as that, whether every ſingle man ſhould ſtand for himſelf, or whether the common father ſhould ſtand for all.

3. It is from little thoughts of God, that you truſt in your own righteouſneſs, and think that God ought to have reſpect

reſpect to you for that. If you knew how great a Being God is, if you ſaw that he is God indeed, you could not have ſuch a thought of your own righteouſneſs; it would look to you exceeding poor, empty, and miſerable; you would ſee how unworthy it is to be offered to God, what a miſerable preſent it is to be offered to ſuch a Being, how unworthy of God's acceptance; you would be quite out of conceit of it. It is becauſe you are blind, and know not what a Being he is with whom you have to do, that you make ſo much of your own righteouſneſs. If you had your eyes open to ſee that God is God indeed, you would wonder how you could think to commend yourſelves to ſo great a Being by your gifts, by ſuch poor affections, ſuch poor broken prayers, wherein is ſo much hypocriſy, and ſo much ſelfiſhneſs.

If you had not indeed little thoughts of God, you could not think that God would be taken with ſuch things as theſe; you could not think that God would have his heart drawn, and his affections, as it were, wrought upon, by your prayers. If you had not very mean thoughts of God, you could not think that what you have is ſufficient to be offered to purchaſe his favour; you would wonder that ever you could think that you could purchaſe the favour and love of ſo great a God by your ſervices. You would ſee that it would be unworthy of God to beſtow ſuch a mercy upon you, as peace with him, and his everlaſting love, and the enjoyment of himſelf, for ſuch a price as you have to offer. If you knew what God is, you would ſee that he would exceedingly diſhonour himſelf in ſo doing.

It is becauſe you have low thoughts of God, that you entertain ſuch a fooliſh imagination, as that your righteouſneſs can make compenſation to God's injured and affronted majeſty. It is becauſe you know not how great that majeſty is. If you ſaw what God is, you would cry out of your uncleanneſs, as Job did, Job xlii. 5. 6. "Now mine eye "ſeeth thee; wherefore I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt "and aſhes." And as Iſaiah did, chap. vi. 5. "Wo is me, "for I am undone, becauſe I am a man of unclean lips; "for mine eyes have ſeen the King, the Lord of hoſts."

4. It is from mean thoughts of God, that you contend with God, becauſe he beſtows grace on ſome, and not on others who are no more undeſerving. Thus God doth: he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; he takes one, and leaves another, of thoſe who are in themſelves equally undeſerving, and in like circumſtances; as it is ſaid of Jacob

and Eſau, while they were not yet born, and had done neither good nor evil, "Jacob have I loved, but Eſau have I "hated," Rom. ix. 10. 11. 12. 13. Yea, God ſometimes takes thoſe who have been more undeſerving, and leaves to periſh them that have been leſs undeſerving.

With this ſinners often quarrel; but it is from their little thoughts of God that they do ſo. For they that upon this ground quarrel with God ſuppoſe him to be bound to beſtow his grace on ſinners. For if he be bound to none, then he may take his choice, and beſtow it on whom he pleaſes; and his beſtowing it on ſome brings no obligation on him to beſtow it on others. And if it be not ſo, God hath no right to his own grace; it is not at his own diſpoſal; and God is incapable of making a gift or preſent of it to any man: for a perſon cannot make a preſent of that which is not his own, or in his own right. It is impoſſible to give a debt.

But what a mean thought of God does this argue! Conſider what it is you would make of God. Muſt the great God be ſo tied up, that he cannot uſe his own pleaſure in beſtowing his own gifts? But muſt he be looked upon as obliged to beſtow them on one, becauſe it is his pleaſure to beſtow them on another? Is not God worthy to have the ſame right to diſpoſe of his gifts, as a man has of his money? or is it becauſe God is not ſo great, and therefore ſhould be more ſubject, more under bonds, than men? Is not God worthy to have as abſolute a propriety in his goods as man has in his? At this rate, God cannot make a preſent of any thing; he has nothing of his own to beſtow. If he have a mind to ſhow a peculiar favour to ſome, to lay ſome under ſpecial obligations, he cannot do it, becauſe his favour is not at his own diſpoſal. The thing is, men have low thoughts of God, or elſe they would willingly aſcribe ſovereignty to him in this matter. They have very mean thoughts of God, and high thoughts of themſelves; and therefore they look upon God as having ſo little right, and themſelves ſo much. Matth. xx. 15. "Is it not lawful for me to do what "I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, becauſe I am "good?"

God is pleaſed to ſhow mercy to his enemies, to thoſe who hate him; yet when he does it, he will not do it as being bound, but according to his own ſovereign pleaſure. And ſurely it is fit he ſhould. How unreaſonable is it to think that God ſtands bound to his enemies! Therefore conſider what you do in quarrelling with God, and oppoſing

ſing his ſovereignty. Conſider with whom it is you contend. Let all ſorts of men, who are ſenſible of their miſery, and are afraid of the wrath of God, conſider theſe things. Thoſe of you that have been long ſeeking ſalvation, thoſe that have taken great pains, thoſe that have hitherto been left, while others of your neighbours and companions have been taken, thoſe that are in great terrors through fear that God will deſtroy you, conſider what you have heard, and *be ſtill, and know that he is God.* Be ſtill, when God ſeems to turn a deaf ear to your cries; be ſtill, when he ſeems to manifeſt his wrath againſt you, and frowns upon you; be ſtill, when he ſhows mercy to others, your equals, or thoſe that are worſe than you, and have been ſeeking a leſs time than you. Conſider who he is that diſpoſes and orders theſe things. You ſhall conſider it; you ſhall know it; God will make all men to know that he is God. You ſhall either know it for your good here, or to your coſt hereafter.

SER.

SERMON V*.

Great Guilt no Obſtacle to the Pardon of the returning Sinner.

PSALM, XXV. 11.

For thy name's ſake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.

IT is evident by ſome paſſages in this pſalm, that when it was penned it was a time of affliction and danger with David. This appears particularly by the 15th and following verſes: "Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord; for he ſhall "pluck my feet out of the net," &c. His diſtreſs makes him think of his ſins, and leads him to confeſs them, and to cry to God for pardon, as is ſuitable in a time of affliction. See verſ. 7. "Remember not the ſins of my youth, "nor my tranſgreſſions;" and verſ. 18. "Look upon mine "affliction, and my pain, and forgive all my ſins."

It is obſervable in the text, what arguments the Pſalmiſt makes uſe of in pleading for pardon.

1. He pleads not any thing of his own, but pleads for pardon *for God's name's ſake*. He has no expectation of pardon for the ſake of any righteouſneſs or worthineſs of his; for any good deeds he had done, or any compenſation he had made for his ſins; though, if man's righteouſneſs could be a juſt plea, David would have had as much to plead as moſt that have been in the world. But he begs that God would do it for his own name's ſake, for his own glory, for the glory of his own free grace, and for the honour of his own covenant-faithfulneſs. Sometimes the ſaints in their prayers plead for mercy, for God's name's ſake, and ſome-

* Not dated. All the Sermons in this collection which are not dated, are ſuppoſed to have been written before the year 1733, as from that period our author dated his Sermons.

times

times for his mercy and truth's ſake; but they never plead their own righteouſneſs.

2 The Pſalmiſt pleads the *greatneſs of his ſins* as an argument for mercy. He not only doth not plead his own righteouſneſs, or the ſmallneſs of his ſins; he not only doth not ſay, Pardon mine iniquity, for I have done much good to counterbalance it; or, Pardon mine iniquity, for it is ſmall, and thou haſt no great reaſon to be angry with me; mine iniquity is not ſo great, that thou haſt any juſt cauſe to remember it againſt me; mine offence is not ſuch, but that thou mayeſt well enough overlook it: but, on the contrary, he ſays, *Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great*; he pleads the greatneſs of his ſin, and not the ſmallneſs of it; he enforces his prayer with this conſideration, that his ſins are very heinous.

But how could he make this a plea for pardon? I anſwer. Becauſe the greater his iniquity was, the more need he had of pardon. It is as much as if he had ſaid, Pardon mine iniquity, for it is ſo great that I cannot bear the puniſhment; my ſin is ſo great that I am in neceſſity of pardon; my caſe will be exceedingly miſerable, unleſs thou be pleaſed to pardon me. He makes uſe of the greatneſs of his ſin, to enforce his plea for pardon, as a man would make uſe of the greatneſs of calamity in begging for relief. When a beggar begs for bread, he will plead the greatneſs of his poverty and neceſſity. When a man in diſtreſs cries for pity, what more ſuitable plea can be urged than the extremity of his caſe?

So David uſes the greatneſs of his ſins as an argument to enforce his plea for pardon. And God allows ſuch a plea as this; for he is moved to mercy towards us by nothing in us but the miſerableneſs of our caſe. He doth not pity ſinners becauſe they are worthy, but becauſe they need his pity.

Doctrine. If we truly come to God for mercy, the greatneſs of our ſin will be no impediment to pardon.

If it be an impediment, David would never have uſed it as a plea for pardon, as we find he does in the text.

The following things are needful in order that we truly come to God for mercy.

1. That we ſhould ſee our miſery, and be ſenſible of our need of mercy. They who are not ſenſible of their miſery cannot truly look to God for mercy; for it is the very notion of divine mercy, that it is the goodneſs and grace of God

God to the miſerable. Without miſery in the object, there can be no exerciſe of mercy. To ſuppoſe mercy without ſuppoſing miſery, or pity without calamity, is a contradiction: therefore men cannot look upon themſelves as proper objects of mercy, unleſs they firſt know themſelves to be miſerable; and ſo, unleſs this be the caſe, it is impoſſible that they ſhould come to God for mercy. It is therefore requiſite, in order that men come to God for mercy, that they be ſenſible that they are in a miſerable condition by nature. They muſt be ſenſible that they are the children of wrath; they muſt ſee that the law is againſt them, and that they are expoſed to the curſe of it: they muſt be ſenſible that they have provoked God to anger; that the wrath of God abideth on them; and that God is angry with them every day, while they are under the guilt of ſin.

They muſt be ſenſible that it is a very dreadful thing to be the object of the wrath of God They muſt be ſenſible that God is a very great and terrible Being; that it is a very awful thing to have him for their enemy; and that they cannot bear his wrath. They muſt be ſenſible that the guilt of ſin makes them miſerable creatures, whatever temporal enjoyments they have; that they can be no other than miſerable undone creatures, ſo long as God is angry with them, however rich they be, and however much of the good things of this world they may poſſeſs. They muſt be ſenſible that they are helpleſs in themſelves; that they are without ſtrength, and muſt periſh, and that eternally, unleſs God help them. They muſt ſee that their caſe is utterly deſperate, for any thing that any one elſe can do for them, but God only. They muſt ſee themſelves hanging over the pit of eternal miſery; and that they muſt neceſſarily drop into it, if God have not mercy on them.

2. They muſt be ſenſible that they *are not worthy* that God ſhould have mercy on them. They who truly come to God for mercy, come as beggars, and not as creditors: they come for mere mercy, for ſovereign grace, and not for any thing that is due. Therefore, they muſt ſee that that miſery under which they lie is juſtly brought upon them, and that that wrath to which they are expoſed is juſtly threatened againſt them. They muſt ſee that God is juſtly angry with them, that they have deſerved it, that they have deſerved that God ſhould be their enemy, and that he ſhould continue to be their enemy. They muſt be ſenſible that it would be juſt with God to do as he hath threatened in his holy

holy law, viz. make them the objects of his wrath and curſe to all eternity; caſt them into hell, and inflict upon them all thoſe torments which the ſcriptures tell of as being there inflicted.

They that come to God for mercy in a right manner, come not with a frame of mind diſpoſed to quarrel with God, and find fault with his ſeverity; but they come in a ſenſe of their own utter unworthineſs, as with ropes about their necks, and lying in the duſt at the foot of mercy.

3. They muſt come to God for mercy in and through Jeſus Chriſt alone. All their hope of mercy muſt be from him, from the conſideration of what he is, what he hath done, and what he hath ſuffered. They muſt be ſenſible that there is no other name given under heaven, among men, whereby we can be ſaved, but that of Chriſt. They muſt believe what the goſpel tells us of Chriſt, the Mediator, that he is the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, having died to make propitiation for our ſins. They muſt have a ſpiritual diſcovery of Chriſt; and their ſouls muſt have an underſtanding of the way of ſalvation in him. They muſt ſee his ſufficiency; ſee that there is enough in him, that his blood cleanſes from all ſin, and that he is ſo worthy, that all ſinners who are in him may well be pardoned and accepted; and from him they muſt take their encouragement.

It is impoſſible that any ſhould come to God for mercy, and at the ſame time have no hope of mercy. Their coming to God for it implies that they have ſome hope of obtaining it, otherwiſe they would not think it worth the while to come. But they that come in a right manner have all their hope through Chriſt, or from the conſideration of his redemption, and the ſufficiency of it.

If perſons thus come to God for mercy, the greatneſs of their ſins will be no impediment to pardon. Let their ſins be ever ſo many, and great, and aggravated, it will not make God in the leaſt degree more backward to pardon them. This may be made evident by the following things.

1. The mercy of God is as ſufficient for the pardon of the greateſt ſins, as for the leaſt; and that becauſe his mercy is infinite. That which is infinite, is as much above what is great, as it is above what is ſmall. That which is great comes no nearer to the bounds of that which is infinite, than that which is the leaſt; becauſe there are no bounds to it. Thus God being infinitely great, he is as much above kings as he is above beggars; he is as much a-

bove the higheſt angel as he is above the meaneſt worm. One finite meaſure doth not come any nearer to the extent of what is infinite, than another.

So it is with reſpect to the mercy of God. The mercy of God being infinite, it muſt be as ſufficient for the pardon of all ſin, as for one. If one of the leaſt ſins be not beyond the mercy of God, ſo neither are the greateſt, or ten thouſand of them. If a man, when he hath been guilty of one idle word or ſinful thought, is not got beyond the mercy of God, he will not get beyond his mercy if he goes on multiplying tranſgreſſions all his life, ſo but that his mercy is ſufficient for the pardon of them all. Thus, if the mercy of God was ſufficient for the pardon of our firſt parents ſin in eating the forbidden fruit, it will follow, that it is ſufficient for the pardon of all the ſins that all mankind have committed from the beginning of the world, or ſhall commit to the end of it. And it is evident it is ſufficient for this, by thoſe diſpenſations of grace which are revealed to us in the goſpel.

However, it muſt be acknowledged, that this alone doth not prove the doctrine. For it may be ſo, that the mercy of God may be as ſufficient for the pardon of great ſins as others; and yet there may be obſtacles in the way of the pardon of great ſins. There may be other obſtacles, beſides the want of mercy. The mercy of God may be ſufficient, and yet the other attributes of God may oppoſe the diſpenſation of mercy in theſe caſes.——Therefore I obſerve,

2. That the ſatisfaction of Chriſt is as ſufficient for the removal of the greateſt guilt, as the leaſt: 1 John, i. 7. "The blood of Chriſt cleanſeth from all ſin." Acts xiii. 39. "By him all that believe are juſtified from all things "from which ye could not be juſtified by the law of Mo-"ſes." All the ſins of thoſe who truly come to God for mercy, let them be what they will, are ſatisfied for, if God be true who tells us ſo; and if they be ſatisfied for, ſurely it is not incredible, that God ſhould be ready to pardon them. So that Chriſt having fully ſatisfied for all ſin, or having wrought out a ſatisfaction that is ſufficient for all, it is now no way inconſiſtent with the glory of any of the attributes of God, to pardon the greateſt ſins of thoſe that do in a right manner come unto him for it.

God may now pardon the greateſt ſinner without any prejudice to the honour of his holineſs. The holineſs of God will not ſuffer him to give the leaſt countenance to ſin,

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but inclines him to give proper teſtimonies of his hatred of it, and diſpleaſure againſt it. But Chriſt having ſatisfied for ſin, God can now love the ſinner, and give no countenance at all to ſin, however great a ſinner he may have been. It was a ſufficient teſtimony of God's abhorrence of ſin, how great ſoever the ſin be, that he poured out his wrath on his own dear Son, when he took the guilt of it upon himſelf. Nothing can more ſhow God's abhorrence of ſin than this. If all mankind had been eternally damned, it would not have been ſo great a teſtimony of it.

God may, through Chriſt, pardon the greateſt ſinner without any prejudice to the honour of his majeſty. The honour of God's majeſty indeed requires ſatisfaction; but the ſufferings of Chriſt fully repair the injury. Let the contempt be ever ſo great, yet if ſo honourable a perſon as Chriſt undertakes to be a Mediator for the offender, and ſuffers ſo much for him, it fully repairs the injury done to the Majeſty of heaven and earth. The ſufferings of Chriſt do fully ſatisfy the juſtice of God. The juſtice of God, as the ſupreme Governor and Judge of the world, requires the puniſhment of ſin. The ſupreme Judge muſt judge the world according to a rule of juſtice. God doth not ſhow mercy as a judge, but as a ſovereign; therefore God's exerciſe of mercy as a ſovereign, and his juſtice as a judge, muſt be made conſiſtent one with another; and this is done by the ſufferings of Chriſt, in which ſin is puniſhed fully, and juſtice anſwered. Chriſt ſuffered enough for the greateſt ſinner that ever was in the world: Rom. iii. 25. 26. "Whom "God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation through faith in "his blood, to declare his righteouſneſs for the remiſſion "of ſins that are paſt, through the forbearance of God; "to declare, I ſay, at this time, his righteouſneſs; that he "might be juſt, and the juſtifier of him which believeth in "Jeſus."

The law is no impediment in the way of the pardon of the greateſt ſin, if men do but truly come to God for mercy: For Chriſt hath fulfilled the law, he hath borne the curſe of it, in his ſufferings: Gal. iii. 13. "Chriſt hath re-"deemed us from the curſe of the law, being made a curſe "for us; for it is written, Curſed is every one that hang-"eth on a tree."

3. Chriſt will not refuſe to ſave the greateſt ſinners, who in a right manner come to God for mercy; for this is his work. It is his buſineſs to be a Saviour of ſinners; it is the work upon which he came into the world; and there-

fore he will not object to it. He did not come to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance, Matth. ix. 13. Sin is the very evil which he came into the world to remedy; therefore he will not object to remedying any man, that he is very ſinful. The more ſinful he is, the more he has of that evil which Chriſt came to remedy, and ſo the more need of Chriſt.

The ſinfulneſs of man was the reaſon of Chriſt's coming into the world; this is the very miſery from which he came to deliver men: therefore he will not object to delivering them from this miſery, that they have a great deal of it. The more they have of it, the more need they have of being delivered: "They that are whole need not a phyſician, "but they that are ſick," Matth. ix. 12. And the more ſick men are, ſo much the more need they ſtand in of the phyſician. The phyſician will not make it an objection againſt healing a man who applies to him, that he is very ſick indeed, and ſtands in great need of his help. If a phyſician of compaſſion comes among the ſick and wounded, ſurely he will not refuſe to heal thoſe that ſtand in the moſt need of healing, if he be able to heal them.

4. Herein doth the glory of the grace and redemption of Chriſt much conſiſt, viz. in its ſufficiency for the pardon of the greateſt ſinners. The whole contrivance of the way of ſalvation is for this end, to glorify the free grace of God. God had it on his heart from all eternity to glorify this attribute of his; and therefore it is that there is any ſuch thing at all as redemption. God was determined to ſhow how great and wonderful his grace and mercy are, and therefore the device of ſaving ſinners by Chriſt was conceived.

But the greatneſs of divine grace appears very much in this, that God pardons ſo great ſins, that he by Chriſt ſaves the greateſt offenders. The greater the guilt of any ſinner is, the more glorious and wonderful is the grace manifeſted in his pardon: Rom. v. 20. "Where ſin abounded, grace "did much more abound." The apoſtle, when telling how great a ſinner he had been, takes notice of the abounding of grace in his pardon, of which his great guilt was the occaſion: 1 Tim. i. 13. "Who was before a blaſphemer, and "a perſecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy; and "the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith "and love which is in Chriſt Jeſus."

The Redeemer is glorified, in that he proves ſufficient to redeem thoſe who are exceeding ſinful, in that his blood proves

proves ſufficient to waſh away the greateſt guilt, in that he is able to ſave even to the uttermoſt, and in that he redeems men from the greateſt miſery. It is the honour of Chriſt to ſave the greateſt ſinners, when they come to him, as it is the honour of a phyſician that he cures the moſt deſperate diſeaſes or wounds. Therefore, no doubt, Chriſt will be willing to ſave the greateſt ſinners, if they come to him; for he will not be backward to glory himſelf, and to commend the value and virtue of his own blood. Seeing he hath ſo laid out himſelf to redeem ſinners, he will not be unwilling to ſhow that he is able to redeem to the uttermoſt.

5. Pardon is as much offered and promiſed to the greateſt ſinners as any, if they will come aright to God for mercy. The invitations of the goſpel are always in univerſal terms; as, Ho, every one that thirſteth; come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden; and whoſoever will, let him come. And the voice of Wiſdom is to men in general: Prov. viii. 4. "Unto you, O men, I call, and my "voice is to the ſons of men." Not to moral men, or religious men, but *to you, O men.* So Chriſt promiſes, John vi. 37. "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wiſe "caſt out." This is the direction of Chriſt to his apoſtles, after his reſurrection, Mark xvi. 15. 16. "Go ye into all "the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature: he "that believeth, and is baptiſed, ſhall be ſaved." Which is agreeable to what the apoſtle ſaith, that "the goſpel "was preached to every creature which is under heaven," Col. 1. 23.

APPLICATION.

The proper *uſe* of this ſubject is, to encourage ſinners whoſe conſciences are burdened with a ſenſe of their guilt, and with the apprehenſion of the anger of God, immediately to go to God through Chriſt for mercy. If you can find it in your hearts to go in the manner we have deſcribed, the arms of mercy are open to embrace you. You need not be at all the more fearful of coming becauſe of your ſins, let them be ever ſo black. If you had as much guilt lying on each of your ſouls as all the wicked men in the world, and all the damned ſouls in hell; yet if you found it in your hearts to come to God for mercy, ſenſible of your own vileneſs, and ſeeking pardon only through the free mercy of God in

in Chriſt, you would not need to be afraid; you might come boldly, and lay hold on mercy, and the greatneſs of your ſins would be no impediment to your pardon.

Therefore, if your ſouls be burdened, and you are diſtreſſed for fear of hell, you need not bear that burden and diſtreſs any longer. If you are but *willing*, you may freely come and unload yourſelves, and caſt all your burdens on Chriſt, and reſt in him.

But here I ſhall ſpeak to ſome objections which ſome awakened ſinners may be ready to make againſt what I now exhort them to.

Objection 1. Some may be ready to object, and ſay, I have ſpent my youth and all the beſt of my life in ſin, and I am afraid God will not accept of me, when I offer him only mine old age.

Anſwer 1. Hath God ſaid any where, that he will not accept of old ſinners who come to him? God hath often made offers and promiſes in univerſal terms; and is there any ſuch exception put in? Doth Chriſt ſay, All that thirſt, let them come to me and drink, except old ſinners? Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, except old ſinners, and I will give you reſt? Him that cometh to me, I will in no wiſe caſt out, unleſs he be an old ſinner? Did you ever read any ſuch exception any where in the Bible? and why ſhould you give way to exceptions which you make out of your own heads, or rather which the devil puts into your heads, and which have no foundation in the word of God?

Indeed it is more rare that old ſinners are willing to come, than others; but if they do come, they are as readily accepted as any whatever.

Anſ. 2. When God accepts of young perſons, it is not for the ſake of the ſervice which they are like to do him afterwards, or becauſe youth is better worth accepting than old age. You ſeem entirely to miſtake the matter, in thinking that God will not accept of you becauſe you are old; as though it were becauſe of the worthineſs of perſons age that he accepts of them; or as though he readily accepted of perſons in their youth, becauſe their youth is better worth his acceptance than old age is. You think God is willing to accept of young people, becauſe they are in the bloom of their youth; whereas it is not for the ſake of that at all that God is willing to accept of any, but only for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt.

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You ſay, your life is almoſt ſpent, and you are afraid that the beſt time for ſerving God is paſt; and that therefore God will not now accept of you; as if it were for the ſake of the ſervice which perſons are like to do him, after they are converted, that he accepts of them. But a ſelf-righteous ſpirit is at the bottom of ſuch objections. Men cannot get off from the notion, that it is for ſome goodneſs or ſervice of their own, either done or expected to be done, that God accepts of perſons, and receives them into favour.

Indeed they who deny God their youth, the beſt part of their lives, and ſpend it in the ſervice of Satan, dreadfully ſin and provoke God; and God doth very often puniſh them, by leaving them to hardneſs of heart, when they are grown old. But if they are willing to accept of Chriſt when they are old, he is as ready to receive them as any others; for in that matter God hath reſpect only to Chriſt and his worthineſs.

Obj. 2. But I am afraid that I have committed ſins that are peculiar to reprobates. I have ſinned againſt light, and againſt ſuch clear and ſtrong convictions of conſcience; I have ſinned ſo preſumptuouſly; I have ſo preſumed upon mercy; I have gone on in ſin, while conſcience hath ſo flown in my face; and I have ſo reſiſted the ſtrivings of the Spirit of God, that I am afraid I have committed ſuch ſins as none of God's elect ever commit. I cannot think that God will ever leave one whom he intends to ſave, to go on and commit ſins againſt ſo much light and conviction, and with ſuch horrid preſumption.

Others may ſay, I have had ſuch riſings of heart againſt God; I have had ſuch a ſpirit of quarrelling againſt God, ſuch blaſphemous thoughts, and ſuch a ſpiteful and malicious ſpirit, and have abuſed mercy and the ſtrivings of the Spirit in ſuch a manner; I have ſo trampled upon the Saviour, and have ſinned ſo much with a helliſh ſpirit, that I am afraid that my ſins are ſuch as are peculiar to thoſe who are reprobated to eternal damnation.

Anſ. 1. There is no ſin peculiar to reprobates but the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. Do you read of any other any where in the word of God? And if you do not read of any there, what ground have you to think any ſuch thing? What other rule have we, by which to judge of ſuch matters, but the word of God? If we venture to go beyond that, we ſhall be miſerably in the dark. When we pretend to go further in our determinations than the word

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of God, Satan takes us up, and leads us. It ſeems to you that ſuch ſins are peculiar to the reprobate, and ſuch as God never forgives But what reaſon can you give for it, if you have no word of God to reveal it? Is it becauſe you cannot ſee how the mercy of God is ſufficient to pardon, or the blood of Chriſt to cleanſe from ſuch preſumptuous ſins? If ſo, it is becauſe you never yet ſaw how great the mercy of God is; you never ſaw the ſufficiency of the blood of Chriſt, and you know not how far the virtue of it extends. The elect are guilty of all manner of ſins, except the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt; and unleſs you have been guilty of this, you have not been guilty of any that are peculiar to reprobates.

Anſ. 2. Men may be leſs likely to believe for ſins which they commit, and not the leſs readily pardoned when they do believe. It muſt be acknowledged that ſome ſinners are in more danger of hell than others. Though all are in great danger, ſome are leſs likely to be ſaved than others. Some are leſs likely ever to be converted and to come to Chriſt; but all who do come to Chriſt are alike readily accepted; and there is as much encouragement for one man to come to Chriſt as another.

Such ſins as you mention are indeed exceeding heinous and provoking to God, and do in a ſpecial manner bring the ſoul into danger of damnation, and into danger of being given up to final hardneſs of heart; and God doth more commonly give men up to the judgement of final hardneſs for ſuch ſins, than for others. Yet they are not peculiar to reprobates; there is but one ſin that is ſo, viz. that againſt the Holy Ghoſt. And notwithſtanding the ſins which you have committed, if you can find it in your hearts to come to Chriſt, and cloſe with him, you will be accepted not at all the leſs readily becauſe you have committed ſuch ſins.

God doth more rarely cauſe ſome ſorts of ſinners to come to Chriſt than others; not becauſe his mercy is not as ſufficient for them, or the redemption of Chriſt as ſufficient for them as for others, but becauſe in wiſdom he ſees fit ſo to diſpenſe his grace, for a reſtraint upon the wickedneſs of men, and becauſe it is his will to give converting grace in the way of the uſe of means, among which this is one, viz. to lead a moral and religious life, and agreeable to our light, and the convictions of our own conſciences. But when once a ſinner, let him be who he will, is willing to come to Chriſt for mercy, mercy is as

ready

ready for him as for any. There is no conſideration at all had of his ſins; let him have been ever ſo ſinful, his ſins are not remembered; God doth not upbraid him with them.

Obj. 3. But had I not better ſtay till I ſhall have made myſelf better, before I preſume to come to Chriſt I have been very wicked, and ſee myſelf to be very wicked now; but am in hopes of mending myſelf, and rendering myſelf at leaſt not ſo wicked: then I ſhall have more courage to come to God for mercy.

Anſ. 1. Conſider how unreaſonably you act. You are ſtriving to rob Chriſt of the glory of ſaving you, that he may be more willing to ſave you. You are ſtriving to ſet up yourſelves for your own ſaviours; you are ſtriving to get ſomething of your own, on the account of which you may the more readily be accepted. So that by this it appears that you do not lay out to be accepted only on Chriſt's account. And is not this to rob Chriſt of the glory of being your only Saviour? Yet this is the way in which you are hoping to make Chriſt willing to ſave you. You ſtrive to make Chriſt willing to ſave you, by robbing him of the glory of being your only Saviour.

Anſ. 2. You can never come to Chriſt at all, unleſs you firſt ſee that Chriſt will not accept of you at all the more readily for any thing that you can do. You muſt firſt ſee, that it is utterly in vain for you to try to make yourſelves better on any ſuch account. You muſt ſee that you can never make yourſelves any more worthy, or leſs unworthy, by any thing which you can do.

Anſ. 3. If ever you truly come to Chriſt, you muſt ſee that there is enough in him for your pardon, though you be no better than you are. If you ſee not the ſufficiency of Chriſt to pardon you, as bad as you are, and without doing any thing to mend the matter, without any righteouſneſs of your own to recommend you, you never will come to him, ſo as to be accepted of him. The way to be accepted is, not to come on any ſuch encouragement, that now you have made yourſelves better, and more worthy, or not ſo unworthy, to be accepted, but to come on the mere encouragement of his worthineſs, and God's mercy.

Anſ. 4. If ever you truly come to Chriſt, you muſt come to him to make you better. You muſt ſee that that is what you cannot do. You muſt come as a patient comes to his phyſician, with his diſeaſes or wounds to be

cured. You muſt come and ſpread all your wickedneſs before him, and not plead your goodneſs; but plead your badneſs, and neceſſity on that account; and ſay, as the Pſalmiſt in the text, not pardon mine iniquity, for it is not ſo great as it was, but, "Pardon mine iniquity, for it is "great."

SER-

SERMON VI*.

The Moſt High a Prayer-hearing God.

PSALM, lxv. 2.

O thou that heareſt Prayer.

THIS pſalm ſeems to be a pſalm of praiſe to God for ſome remarkable anſwer of prayer, in the beſtowment of ſome public mercy; or elſe was written on occaſion of ſome ſpecial faith and confidence which David had that his prayer would be anſwered It is probable that this mercy beſtowed, or expected to be beſtowed, was ſome great public mercy, for which David had been very earneſt and importunate, and had annexed a vow to his prayer; and that he had vowed a vow to God, that if he would grant him his requeſt, he would do thus or thus, to praiſe and glorify God.

This ſeems to be the reaſon why he expreſſes himſelf as he does in the firſt verſe of the pſalm: "Praiſe waiteth for "thee, O God, in Sion; and unto thee ſhall the vow be "performed;" i. e. that praiſe which I have vowed to give thee, on the anſwer of my prayer, waiteth for thee, to be given thee as ſoon as thou ſhalt have anſwered my prayer; and the vow which I made to thee ſhall be performed.

In the verſe of the text, is a prophecy of the glorious times of the goſpel, when "all fleſh ſhall come" to the true God, as to *the God who heareth prayer*; which is here mentioned as what diſtinguiſhes the true God from the gods to whom the nations prayed and ſought, thoſe gods who cannot hear, and cannot anſwer their prayer. The time was

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coming when all fleſh ſhould come to that God who *doth hear prayer.*

DOCTRINE. It is the character of the Moſt High, that he is a God that hears prayer.

I ſhall handle this point in the following method.

1. Show that the Moſt High is a God that hears prayer.
2. That he is eminently ſuch a God.
3. That he is ſo diſtinguiſhingly, or that herein he is diſtinguiſhed from all falſe gods.
4. Give the reaſons of the doctrine.

I. The Moſt High is a God that hears prayer. Though he is infinitely above all, and ſtands in no need of creatures; yet he is graciouſly pleaſed to take a merciful notice of poor worms of the duſt. He manifeſts and preſents himſelf as the object of prayer, appears as ſitting on a mercy ſeat, that men may come to him by prayer. When they ſtand in need of any thing, he allows them to come to him, and ask it of him; and he is wont to hear their prayers. God in his word hath given many promiſes that he will hear their prayers; the ſcripture is full of examples of it; and God in his diſpenſations towards his church, manifeſts himſelf to be a God that hears prayer.

Here it may be inquired, What is meant by God's hearing prayer? There are two things implied in it.

1. His accepting the ſupplications of thoſe who pray to him. He accepts them when they come to him; their addreſs to him is well taken, he is well pleaſed with it. He approves of their coming to him, and approves of their aſking ſuch mercies as they requeſt of him, and approves of their manner of doing it. He accepts of their prayers as an offering to him; he accepts the honour they do him in prayer.

2. He acts agreeably to his acceptance; and that two ways:

(1.) He ſometimes manifeſts his acceptance of their prayers, by ſpecial diſcoveries of his mercy and ſufficiency which he makes in prayer, or immediately after. God is ſometimes pleaſed to manifeſt his acceptance of his people's prayers: he gives them ſpecial communion with him in prayer. While they are praying, he as it were comes to them, and diſcovers himſelf to them; gives them ſweet views of his glorious grace, purity, ſufficiency, and ſovereignty;

reignty; and enables them, with great quietneſs, to reſt in him, and leave themſelves and prayers with him, ſubmitting to his will, and truſting in his grace and faithfulneſs. Such a manifeſtation God ſeems to have made of himſelf in prayer to *Hannah*, which ſo quieted and compoſed her mind, and took away her ſadneſs. We read in the firſt chapter of the firſt book of *Samuel*, how earneſt ſhe was, and how exerciſed in her mind, and that ſhe was a woman of a ſorrowful ſpirit. But ſhe came and poured out her ſoul before God, and ſpake out of the abundance of her complaint and grief; then we read, that ſhe went away, and did eat, and her countenance was no more ſad, verſ 13.; which ſeems to have been from ſome refreſhing diſcoveries which God had made of himſelf to her, to enable her quietly to ſubmit to his will, and truſt in his mercy, whereby God manifeſted his acceptance of her.

Not that I conclude that perſons can hence argue, that the particular thing which they aſk will certainly be given them, or that they can particularly foretell from it what God will do in anſwer to their prayers, any farther than he has promiſed in his word; yet God may, and doubtleſs does, thus teſtify his acceptance of their prayers, and from hence they may confidently reſt in his providence, in his merciful ordering and diſpoſing with reſpect to the thing which they aſk.

(2.) God manifeſts his acceptance of their prayers, by anſwering them, by doing for them agreeably to their needs and ſupplications. He not only inwardly and ſpiritually diſcovers his mercy to their ſouls by his Spirit, but outwardly in his providence, by dealing mercifully with them in his providence, in conſequence of their prayers, and by cauſing an agreeableneſs between his providence and their prayers.——I proceed now,

II. To ſhow that it is eminently the character of the true God, that he is a God that hears prayer. This appears in ſeveral things.

1. In his giving ſuch free acceſs to him by prayer. God in his word manifeſts himſelf ready at all times to allow us to come to him. He ſits on a throne of grace; and there is no vail to hide this throne, and keep us from it. The vail is rent from the top to the bottom; the way is open at all times, and we may go to God as often as we will. Although God be infinitely above us, yet we may come with boldneſs: Heb. iv. 14. 16. "Let us therefore come boldly

"unto

" unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and " find grace to help in time of need." How wonderful is it that ſuch worms as we ſhould be allowed to come boldly at all times to ſo great a God!

Thus God indulges all kinds of perſons, of all nations, Jews or Gentiles: 1 Cor. i. 2. 3. " Unto all that in every " place call on the name of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, both " theirs and ours; grace be unto you," &c. God allows ſuch acceſs to all of all ranks; none are ſo mean but that they may come boldly to God by prayer. Yea, God allows the moſt vile and unworthy; the greateſt ſinners are allowed to come through Chriſt. And God not only allows, but encourages, and frequently invites them; yea, God manifeſts himſelf as delighting in being ſought to by prayer: Prov. xv. 8. " The prayer of the upright is his delight;" and in Cant. ii. 14. we have Chriſt ſaying to the ſpouſe, " O my " dove, let me hear thy voice; for ſweet is thy voice." The voice of the ſaints in prayer is ſweet unto Chriſt; he delights to hear it.

The freeneſs of acceſs by prayer that God allows them, appears wonderfully in his allowing them to be earneſt and importunate; yea, to that degree as to take no denial, and as it were to give him no reſt, and even encouraging them ſo to do: Iſ. lxiii. 6. 7. " Ye that make mention of the " Lord, keep not ſilence, and give him no reſt." Thus Chriſt encourages us, as it were, to weary God out by prayer, in the parable of the importunate widow and the unjuſt judge, Luke xviii. at the beginning. So, in the parable of the man who went to his friend at midnight, to borrow three loaves, Luke xi. 5. &c.

Thus God allowed Jacob to wreſtle with him, yea, to be reſolute in it. God allows men to uſe, as it were, a violence and obſtinacy, if I may ſo ſpeak, this way; as in Jacob, who, when God ſaid, " Let me go," ſaid, " I will not " let thee go, except thou bleſs me." So it is ſpoken of with approbation, when men are violent for the kingdom of heaven, and take it by force. Thus Chriſt ſuffered the blind man to be moſt importunate and unceaſing in his cries to him, Luke xviii. 38. 39. He continued crying, " Jeſus, " thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Others who were preſent rebuked him, that he ſhould hold his peace, looking upon it too great a boldneſs, and an indecent behaviour towards Chriſt, for him thus to cry after him as he paſſed by. But Chriſt himſelf did not rebuke him, though he did not ceaſe at the rebuke of the people, but cried ſo much

much the more. Chriſt was not offended at it, but ſtood and commanded him to be brought unto him, ſaying, "What wilt thou that I ſhould do to thee?" And when the blind man had told him, Chriſt graciouſly granted his requeſt.

The freedom of acceſs that God gives in prayer, appears alſo in allowing us to come to him by prayer for every thing we need, both temporal and ſpiritual, whatever evil we need to be delivered from, or good we would obtain: Phil. iv. 6 "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer "and ſupplication, with thankſgiving, let your requeſts be "made known to God."

2. That God is eminently of this character, appears in his hearing prayer ſo readily. He often manifeſts his readineſs to hear prayer, by giving an anſwer ſo ſpeedily, ſometimes while they are yet ſpeaking, and ſometimes before they pray, when they only have a deſign of praying. So ready is God to hear prayer, that he takes notice of the firſt purpoſe of praying, and ſometimes beſtows mercy thereupon: Iſa. lxv. 24. "And it ſhall come to paſs, that be-"fore they call, I will anſwer; and while they are yet "ſpeaking, I will hear." We read, that when Daniel was making humble and earneſt ſupplication to God, that God ſent an angel to comfort him, and aſſure him of an anſwer, Dan. ix. 20.—24.

And when God defers for the preſent to anſwer the prayer of faith, it is not from any backwardneſs in God to anſwer, but for the good of his people, ſometimes that they may be better prepared for the mercy before they receive it, or becauſe another time would be the beſt and fitteſt time on ſome other account. And even then, when God ſeems to delay an anſwer, the anſwer is indeed haſtened, as in Luke xviii. 7. 8. "And ſhall not God avenge his own elect "that cry unto him day and night, though he bear long "with them? I tell you, that he will avenge them ſpeedi-"ly." Sometimes, when the bleſſing ſeems to tarry, God is even then at work to bring it about in the beſt time and beſt manner: Hab. ii. 3. "Though it tarry, wait for it; it "will come, it will not tarry."

3. That the Moſt High is eminently one that hears prayer, appears by his giving ſo liberally in anſwer to prayer: Jam. i. 5. 6. "If any of you lack wiſdom, let him aſk it of "God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not." Men often ſhow their backwardneſs and loathneſs to give to thoſe who aſk of them, both by the ſcantineſs of their gifts,

and

and by upbraiding thoſe who aſk of them. They will be ſure to put them in mind of theſe and thoſe faults, when they give them any thing; but, on the contrary, God both gives liberally, and upbraids us not with our undeſervings, when he gives.

God is plenteous and rich in his communications to thoſe who call upon him: Pſal. lxxxvi. 5. "For thou art good and "ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all that call "upon thee;" and Rom. x. 12. "For there is no difference "between the Jew and the Greek; for the ſame Lord over "all is rich unto all that call upon him."

Sometimes God not only gives the thing aſked, but he gives more than is aſked. So he did to Solomon, 1 Kings iii. 12. 13. "Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, "I have given thee a wiſe and an underſtanding heart, ſo "that there was none like thee before thee, neither after "thee ſhall any riſe like unto thee. And I have alſo given "thee that which thou haſt not aſked, both riches and ho-"nour; ſo that there ſhall not be any among the kings "like unto thee, all thy days." Yea, God will give more to his people than they can either aſk or think, as is implied in that, Epheſ. iii. 20. "Now, unto him that is able to "do exceeding abundantly above all that we aſk or "think."

4. That God is eminently of this character, appears by the greatneſs of the things which he hath often done in anſwer to prayer. Thus, when Eſau was coming out againſt his brother Jacob, with four hundred men, without doubt fully reſolved to cut him off, Jacob prayed to God, and God turned the heart of Eſau, ſo that he met Jacob in a very friendly manner; as in Gen. xxxii. So in Egypt, at the prayer of Moſes, God brought thoſe dreadful plagues, and at his prayer removed them again. When Samſon was ready to periſh with thirſt, he prayed to God, and God brought water out of a dry jaw-bone, for his ſupply, Judg. xv. 18. 19. And when he prayed, after his ſtrength was departed from him, God ſtrengthened him, ſo as to pull down the temple of Dagon on the Philiſtines; ſo that thoſe whom he ſlew at his death were more than all thoſe whom he ſlew in his life.

Joſhua prayed to God, and ſaid to the ſun, "Sun, ſtand "thou ſtill upon Gibeon, and thou, Moon, in the valley "of Ajalon;" and God heard his prayer, and cauſed the ſun and moon to ſtand ſtill accordingly. The prophet "E-"lijah was a man of like paſſions" with us; "and he prayed "earneſtly

" earneſtly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the " earth by the ſpace of three years and ſix months. And " he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth " brought forth her fruit;" as the apoſtle James obſerves, Jam. v. 17. 18. So God confounded the army of Zerah, the Ethiopian, of a thouſand thouſand, in anſwer to the prayer of Aſa, 2 Chron. xiv. 9. &c. And God ſent an angel, and ſlew in one night an hundred and eighty thouſand men of Sennacharib's army, in anſwer to Hezekiah's prayer, 2 Kings xix. 14. 15. 16. 19.

5. This truth appears, in that God is, as it were, overcome by prayer. When God is diſpleaſed by ſin, and manifeſts his diſpleaſure, and comes out againſt us in his providence, and ſeems to oppoſe and reſiſt us; in ſuch caſes, God is, ſpeaking after the manner of men, overcome by humble and fervent prayer. " The effectual fervent prayer " of a righteous man availeth much," Jam. v. 16. It has a great power in it, ſuch a prayer-hearing God is the Moſt High, that he graciouſly manifeſts himſelf as conquered by it. Thus Jacob conquered in the wreſtle which he had with God. God appeared to oppoſe Jacob in what he ſought of him; he did, as it were, ſtruggle againſt him, and to get away from him; yet Jacob was reſolute, and overcame. Therefore God changed his name from Jacob to Iſrael; for, ſays he, " as a prince thou haſt power with God and " with men, and haſt prevailed," Gen. xxxii. 28. A mighty prince indeed! to be great enough to overcome God: Hoſ. xii. 4. " Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: " he wept and made ſupplication unto him."

So Moſes, from time to time, did in this ſenſe overcome God by prayer. When his anger was provoked againſt Iſrael, and he appeared to be ready to conſume them in his hot diſpleaſure, Moſes ſtood in the gap, and by his humble and earneſt prayer and ſupplication averted the ſtroke of divine vengeance. This appears by Exod. xxxii. 9. &c. and by Numb. xiv. 11. &c.

III. Herein the Moſt High God is diſtinguiſhed from falſe gods. The true God is the only God of this character; there is no other of whom it may be ſaid, that *he heareth prayer*. Thoſe falſe gods are not gods that hear prayer, upon three accounts.

1. For want of a capacity to know what thoſe who worſhip them pray for. Many of thoſe things that are worſhipped as gods in the world, are things without life; ma-

ny are idols made by their worſhippers; they are mere ſtocks and ſtones, that know nothing. They are indeed made with ears; but they hear not the prayers of them that cry to them, let them cry ever ſo loudly: They have eyes; but they ſee not, &c. Pſal. cxv. 5.—9.

Others, though they are not the work of mens hands, yet are things without life. Thus, many worſhip the ſun, moon, and ſtars, which, though glorious creatures, yet are not capable of knowing any thing of the wants and deſires of thoſe who pray to them

Others worſhip ſome certain kinds of brute animals, as the Egyptians were wont to worſhip bulls, which, though they be not without life, yet are deſtitute of that reaſon whereby they would be capable of knowing the requeſts of their worſhippers. Others worſhip devils, inſtead of the true God: 1 Cor. x. 20. "But I ſay, that the things which "the Gentiles ſacrifice, they ſacrifice to devils." Theſe, though they are beings of great powers and underſtandings, and great ſubtlety, have not that knowledge which is neceſſary to capacitate them fully to underſtand the ſtate, circumſtances, neceſſities, and deſires of thoſe who pray to them. No devil is capable of a perfect underſtanding of the circumſtances and need of any one perſon, much leſs of attending to, and being thoroughly acquainted with, all who pray to them through the world.

But the true God perfectly knows the circumſtances of every one that prays to him throughout the world; he perfectly knows the needs and deſires of every one. If there be millions praying to him at once, in different parts of the world, it is no more difficult to him, who is infinite in knowledge, to take notice of all, and perfectly to be acquainted with every one, than of one alone. But it is not ſo with any other being but the Moſt High God.

God is ſo perfect in knowledge, that he doth not need to be informed by us, in order to a knowledge of our wants; for he knows what things we need before we aſk him. The worſhippers of falſe gods were wont to lift their voices and cry aloud, leſt their gods ſhould fail of hearing them, as Elijah tauntingly bid the worſhippers of Baal do, 1 Kings, xviii. 27. But the true God hears the ſilent petitions of his people. He needs not that we ſhould cry aloud; yea, he knows and perfectly underſtands when we only pray in our hearts, as Hannah did, 1 Sam. i. 13.

2. Falſe gods are not prayer-hearing gods, for want of power to anſwer prayer. Idols are but vanities and lies; in

in them is no help. As to power or knowledge, they are nothing; as the apoſtle ſays, 1 Cor. viii. 4 "An idol is no-"thing in the world" As to the images that are the works of mens hands, they are ſo far from having any power to anſwer prayer, or to help them that pray to them, that they are not able at all to act: "They have hands, and handle "not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither ſpeak "they through their throat." They, therefore, that make them, and pray to them, are ſenſeleſs and ſottiſh, and make themſelves ſtocks and ſtones, like unto them: Pſal. cxv. 7. 8. and Jer. x. 5. "They are upright as the palm tree, "but ſpeak not: they muſt needs be borne, becauſe they "cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do "evil; neither alſo is it in them to do good." As to the hoſts of heaven, the ſun, moon, and ſtars, although mankind receive benefit by them, yet they act nothing voluntarily, but only by neceſſity of nature; therefore they have no power to do any thing in anſwer to prayers. And devils that are worſhipped as gods, they are not able, if they had diſpoſition, to make thoſe happy who worſhip them, and can do nothing at all but only by divine permiſſion, and as ſubject to the diſpoſal of divine providence.

Falſe gods can none of them ſave thoſe that pray to them; and therefore, when the children of Iſrael departed from the true God to idols, and were diſtreſſed by their enemies, and cried to God in their diſtreſs, God reproved them for their folly in worſhipping falſe gods, by bidding them go and cry to the gods whom they had ſerved, and let them deliver them in the time of their tribulation, Joſh. x. 14. So God challenges thoſe gods themſelves, in Iſa. xli. 23. 24. "Show us things that are to come hereafter, that we may "know that ye are gods; yea, do good or do evil, that we "may be diſmayed and behold it together. Behold ye are "of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination "is he that chuſeth you."

Theſe falſe gods, inſtead of helping thoſe who pray to them, cannot help themſelves. The devils are miſerable tormented ſpirits; they are bound in chains of darkneſs for their rebellion againſt the true God, and cannot deliver themſelves.

3. Falſe gods are not gods that hear prayer, for want of a diſpoſition to help thoſe who pray to them. As to thoſe lifeleſs idols whom the Heathen worſhip, they are without both any underſtanding and any will at all. As to the devils, who in the dark places of the earth are worſhipped as

gods, they have no diſpoſition to help thoſe who cry to them; for they are cruel ſpirits; they are the mortal enemies of mankind, that thirſt for their blood, and delight in nothing but their miſery. They have no more diſpoſition to help mankind, than a parcel of hungry wolves or lions would have to protect and help a flock of lambs. And thoſe that worſhip and pray to them get not their good-will by ſerving them: all the reward that Satan will give them, for the ſervice which they do him, is to make a prey of them, and devour them.

I proceed now,

IV. To give the reaſons of the doctrine; which I would do in anſwer to theſe two inquiries: 1. Why God requires prayer in order to the beſtowment of mercies on men? 2. Why God is ſo ready to hear the prayers of men?

Inq. 1. Why doth God require prayer in order to the beſtowment of mercies? To this I ſhall anſwer both negatively and affirmatively.

(1.) Negatively. 1. It is not in order that God may be informed of our wants or deſires. God is omniſcient, and with reſpect to his knowledge unchangeable; his knowledge cannot be added to. God never is informed of any thing, nor gains any knowledge by information. He knows what we want a thouſand times more perfectly than we do ourſelves. He knows what things we have need of before we aſk him; he knows our deſires before we declare them by prayer.

2. Nor is it to diſpoſe and incline God to ſhow mercy: for though, in ſpeaking after the manner of men, God is ſometimes in ſcripture repreſented as though he were moved and perſuaded by the prayers and cries of his people; yet it is not to be thought that God is properly moved or made willing by our prayers; for it is no more poſſible that there ſhould be any new inclination or will in God, than new knowledge. The mercy of God is not moved or drawn by any thing in the creature; but the ſpring of God's beneficence is within himſelf only; he is ſelf-moved; and whatſoever mercy he beſtows, the reaſon and ground of it is not to be ſought for in the creature, but in God's own good pleaſure. It is the will of God to beſtow mercy in this way, viz. in anſwer to prayer, when he deſigns beforehand to beſtow mercy, yea, when he has promiſed it; as Ezek. xxxvi. 36. 37. "I the Lord have ſpoken it, and will do

"it.

" it. Thus ſaith the Lord, I will yet for this be inquired " of by the houſe of Iſrael, to do it for them." God has been pleaſed to conſtitute prayer to be an antecedent to the beſtowment of mercy; and he is pleaſed to beſtow mercy in conſequence of prayer, as though he were prevailed on by prayer.

Yet God is not in fact prevailed on or made willing by prayer. But when he ſhows mercy in anſwer to prayer, his intention of mercy is not the effect of the prayer; but that the people of God are ſtirred up to prayer, is the effect of God's intention to ſhow mercy. Becauſe God intends to ſhow mercy, therefore he pours out the ſpirit of grace and ſupplication.

(2.) Affirmatively. There may be two reaſons given why God requires prayer in order to the beſtowment of mercy; one eſpecially reſpects God, and the other reſpects ourſelves.

1. With reſpect to God, prayer is but a ſenſible acknowledgement of our dependence on God, to his glory. As God hath made all things for his own glory, ſo he will be glorified and acknowledged by his creatures; and it is fit that he ſhould require this of thoſe who would be the ſubjects of his mercy. That we, when we ſtand in need of any mercy of God, or deſire to receive any mercy from him, ſhould go to God, and humbly ſupplicate the divine Being for the beſtowment of that mercy, is but a ſuitable acknowledgement of our dependence on the power and mercy of God for that which we need, and but a ſuitable honour paid to the great Author and Fountain of all good.

2. With reſpect to ourſelves, God requires prayer of us in order to the beſtowment of mercy, becauſe it tends to prepare us for the receipt of mercy. Fervent prayer many ways tends to prepare the heart for the receipt of the mercy prayed for. Hereby is excited a ſenſe of our need of the mercy, and of the value of the mercy which we ſeek, and at the ſame time are excited earneſt deſires of it; whereby the mind is more prepared to prize it, and rejoice in it when beſtowed, and to be thankful for it. Prayer, with that confeſſion which ſhould be in prayer, may be the occaſion of a ſenſe of our unworthineſs of the mercy we ſeek; and the placing of ourſelves in the immediate preſence of God may make us ſenſible of his majeſty, and we may be humbled before him, and be fitted to receive mercy of him. Our prayer to God may excite in us a ſuitable ſenſe and conſideration of our dependence on God for the mercy we aſk,

and

and a ſuitable exerciſe of faith in God's ſufficiency, that ſo we may be prepared to glorify his name when the mercy is received.

Inq. 2. Why is God ſo ready to hear the prayers of men? To this I anſwer,

1. Becauſe God is a God of infinite grace and mercy. It is indeed a very wonderful thing, that ſo great a God ſhould be ſo ready to hear our prayers, though we are ſo deſpicable and unworthy; that he ſhould give free acceſs at all times to every one; ſhould allow us to be as importunate as we will, without eſteeming it any indecent boldneſs; ſhould hear all ſincere prayers put up to him; ſhould be ſo ready to hear, and ſo rich in mercy to them that call upon him; that worms of the duſt ſhould have ſuch power with God by prayer; that God ſhould do ſuch great things in anſwer to their prayers, and ſhould ſhow himſelf, as it were, overcome by them. This is very wonderful, when we conſider the diſtance between God and us, and conſider how we have provoked God by our ſins, and how unworthy we are of the leaſt gracious notice.

And it can be reſolved into nothing elſe but infinite mercy and grace. It cannot be from any need that God ſtands in of us; for our goodneſs extendeth not to him. Neither can it be from any thing in us to incline the heart of God to us: it cannot be from any worthineſs in our prayers, which are in themſelves very miſerable polluted things. But it is becauſe God delights in mercy and condeſcenſion. He is herein infinitely diſtinguiſhed from all other gods: he is the great fountain of all good, from whom goodneſs flows as light from the ſun.

2. We have a glorious Mediator, who has prepared the way, that our prayers may be heard conſiſtently with the honour of God's juſtice and majeſty. Not only has God in himſelf mercy ſufficient for this, but the Mediator has provided that this mercy may be exerciſed conſiſtently with the honour of God. Through him we may come to God, and God may ſhow mercy to us: he is the way, the truth, and the life; no man can come to the Father but by him. This Mediator hath done three things to make way for the hearing of our prayers.

(1.) He hath by his blood made atonement for ſin, ſo that our guilt need not ſtand in the way, as a ſeparation-wall between God and us, and that our ſins might not be a cloud through which our prayers cannot paſs; and by his atonement he hath made the way to the throne of grace open.

open. God would have been infinitely gracious if there had been no Mediator; but the way to the mercy-ſeat would have been blocked up. But Chriſt hath removed whatever ſtood in the way. The vail which was before the mercy-ſeat "is rent from the top to the bottom," by the death of Chriſt. If it had not been for the death of Chriſt, our guilt would have remained as a wall of braſs, to hinder our approach. But all is removed by his blood, Heb. x. 17. &c.

(2.) Chriſt has, by his obedience, purchaſed that the prayers of thoſe who believe in him ſhould be heard. He has not only removed the obſtacles to our prayers, but has merited a hearing of them His merits are the incenſe that is offered with the prayers of the ſaints, which renders them a ſweet ſavour to God, and acceptable in his ſight. Hence the prayers of the ſaints have ſuch power with God; hence the prayer of a poor worm of the duſt had ſuch power with God, that in anſwer God ſtopped the ſun in his courſe for about the ſpace of a whole day; hence ſuch unworthy creatures as we are able to overcome God; hence Jacob as a prince had power with God, and prevailed. Our prayers would be of no account, and of no avail with God, were it not for the merits of Chriſt; for in themſelves they are miſerable worthleſs things, and might juſtly be odious and abominable to God.

(3.) Chriſt enforces the prayers of his people, by his interceſſion at the right hand of God in heaven. He hath entered for us into the holy of holies, with the incenſe which he hath provided, and there he makes continual interceſſion for all that come to God in his name; ſo that their prayers come to God the Father through his hands, if I may ſo ſay; which is repreſented in Rev. viii. 3. 4. "And "another angel came and ſtood at the altar, having a golden "cenſor; and there was given unto him much incenſe, that "he ſhould offer it with the prayers of all the ſaints upon "the golden altar, which is before the throne. And the "ſmoke of the incenſe which came with the prayers of the "ſaints, aſcended up before God, out of the angel's hand."

This was typified of old by the prieſts offering incenſe in the temple, at the time when the multitude of the people were offering up their prayers to God; as Luke i. 10. "And "the whole multitude of the people were praying without, "at the time of incenſe."

A P-

APPLICATION.

1. Hence we may learn, how highly we are privileged, in that we have the Moſt High God revealed to us, who is a God that heareth prayer. The greater part of mankind are deſtitute of this privilege; they are ignorant of this God; the gods whom they worſhip are not prayer-hearing gods. Whatever their neceſſities are, whatever calamities or ſorrows they are the ſubjects of, if they meet with grievous and heavy afflictions, wherein they cannot help themſelves, and man is unable to help them, they have no prayer-hearing God to whom they may go. If they go to the gods whom they worſhip, and cry to them ever ſo earneſtly, it will be in vain. They worſhip either lifeleſs things, that can neither help them, nor know that they need help; or wicked cruel ſpirits, who are their enemies, and wiſh nothing but their miſery, and who, inſtead of helping them, are from day to day working their ruin, and watching over them, as an hungry lion watches over his prey.

How are we diſtinguiſhed from them, in that we have the true God made known to us; a God of infinite grace and mercy; a God full of compaſſion to the miſerable, who is ready to pity us under all our troubles and ſorrows, to hear our cries, and to give us all that relief which we need; a God who delights in mercy, and is rich to all that call upon him! How highly privileged are we, in that we have the holy word of this ſame God, to direct us how to come to him, and ſeek mercy of him! And whatever difficulties or diſtreſs we are in, we may go with confidence and great encouragement to him with all our difficulties and complaints. What a comfort may this be to us! and what reaſon have we to rejoice in our own privileges, highly to prize them, and to bleſs God that he hath been ſo merciful to us, as to give us his word, and reveal himſelf to us; and that he hath not left us to cry for help to ſtocks, and ſtones, and devils, as he has left many thouſands of others!

Objection. I have often prayed to God for theſe and thoſe mercies, and God has not heard my prayers.——To this I ſhall anſwer ſeveral things.

(1.) It is no argument, that God is not a prayer-hearing God, if he give not to men what they aſk of him, to conſume upon their luſts. Oftentimes, when men pray for theſe and thoſe temporal good things, they deſire them chiefly to gratify

gratify their luſts. They deſire them for no good end, but only to gratify their pride or ſenſuality. They pray for worldly good things chiefly from a worldly ſpirit: it is becauſe they make too much of an idol of the world; and if ſo, it is no wonder that God doth not hear their prayers: Jam. iv. 3. "Ye aſk and receive not, becauſe ye aſk amiſs, "to conſume it upon your luſts."

It is no argument that God is not a prayer-hearing God, that he will not grant your requeſt, when you aſk him to give you ſomething of which you will make an idol, and ſet it up in oppoſition to him; or that he will not hear you, when you aſk of him theſe and thoſe things to uſe as weapons of warfare againſt him, or as inſtruments to ſerve his enemies. No wonder that God will not hear you, when you pray for ſilver, or gold, or wool, or flax, to offer them to Baal. If God ſhould hear ſuch prayers, he would act as his own enemy, inaſmuch as he would beſtow on his enemies the things which they deſire out of enmity againſt him, and to uſe againſt him as his enemies, and to ſerve his enemies.

(2.) It is no argument that God is not a prayer-hearing God, that he heareth not *inſincere* and *unbelieving* prayers. How can we expect that God ſhould have any reſpect to that which has no ſincerity in it? God looketh not at words, but at the heart; and it is fit that he ſhould do ſo. If men's prayers be not hearty, if they pray only in words, and not in heart, what are their prayers good for? and why ſhould that God who ſearches the heart and tries the reins have any reſpect to them?

Sometimes men do nothing but diſſemble in their prayers; and when they do ſo, it is no argument that God is e'er the leſs a prayer-hearing God, that he doth not hear ſuch prayers; for it is no argument of want of mercy. Sometimes men pray for that in words which they really deſire not in their hearts. Sometimes men pray to God that he would purge them from ſin, when at the ſame time they ſhow by their practice that they do not deſire to be purged from ſin, but love ſin, and chuſe it, and are utterly averſe to parting with it. So they will pray for other ſpiritual bleſſings, of which they have no real deſire. In like manner, they often diſſemble in the pretence and ſhow, which they make in their prayers, of a dependence on God for mercies, and of a ſenſe of his ſufficiency to ſupply them. In our coming to God, and praying to him for ſuch and ſuch things, there is a ſhow that we are ſenſible that we are dependent on him for them, and that he is ſufficient to give them to us. But men

ſometimes ſeem to pray, who are not ſenſible of their dependence on God, nor do they think him to be ſufficient to ſupply them. For ſome things that they go to God for, they all the while truſt in themſelves; and for other things they have no confidence in God.

Another way in which men often diſſemble is, in ſeeming to pray and to be ſupplicants in words, when in heart they pray not, but challenge and demand. They ſhow in words as though they were beggars; but in heart they come as creditors, and look on God as their debtor. In words they ſeem to aſk theſe and thoſe things as the fruit of free grace; but in heart they account it would be hard, unjuſt, and cruel, if God ſhould deny them. In words they ſeem humble and ſubmiſſive, but in heart they are proud and contentious; there is no prayer but in their words.

It doth not render God at all the leſs a prayer-hearing God, that he diſtinguiſhes, as an all-ſeeing God, between real prayers and pretended ones. Such prayers as thoſe which I have juſt now been mentioning, are not worthy of the name of prayers; and they are ſo accounted in the eyes of him who ſearches the heart, and ſees things as they are. Nor would men account ſuch things to be prayers, any more than the talk of a parrot, that knows not what it ſays, were it not that they judge by the outward appearance.

All prayer that is not the prayer *of faith*, is inſincere; for prayer is a ſhow or manifeſtation of dependence on God, and truſt in his ſufficiency and mercy. Therefore, where this truſt or *faith* is wanting, there is no prayer in the ſight of God. And however God is ſometimes pleaſed to grant the requeſts of thoſe who have no *faith*, yet he has not obliged himſelf ſo to do; nor is it an argument of his not being a prayer-hearing God, when he hears them not.

(3.) It is no argument that God is not a prayer-hearing God, that he exerciſes his own wiſdom as to the time and manner of anſwering prayers. Some of God's people are ſometimes ready to think, that God doth not hear their prayers, becauſe he doth not anſwer them at the times when they expected; when indeed God doth hear them, and will anſwer them, in the time and way to which his own wiſdom directs.

The buſineſs of prayer is not to direct God, who is infinitely wiſe, and needs not any of our directions, who knows what is beſt for us ten thouſand times better than we, and knows what time and what way are beſt. It is fit that God ſhould anſwer prayer, as an infinitely wiſe God, in the exer-

ciſe

ciſe of his own wiſdom, and not ours. God will deal as a father with us, in anſwering our requeſts. But a child is not to expect that the father's wiſdom will be ſubject to his; nor ought he to deſire it, but ſhould eſteem it a privilege, that the parent who takes care of him, and provides for him, is wiſer than he, and will provide for him according to his own wiſdom.

As to particular temporal bleſſings for which we pray, it is no argument that God is not a prayer-hearing God, that he beſtows them not upon us; for it may be that God ſees the things for which we pray not to be beſt for us. If ſo, it would be no mercy in him to beſtow them upon us, but a judgement. Such things, therefore, ought always to be aſked with ſubmiſſion to the divine will.

But God can anſwer prayer, though he beſtow not the very thing for which we pray. He can ſometimes better anſwer the lawful deſires and good end we have in prayer another way. If our end be our own good and happineſs, God can perhaps better anſwer that end in beſtowing ſomething elſe than in the beſtowment of that very thing which we aſk. And if the main good we aim at in our prayer be attained, our prayer is anſwered, though not in the beſtowment of the individual thing which we aſk. And ſo that may ſtill be true which was aſſerted in the doctrinal part, viz. *that God always hears the prayer* OF FAITH. God never once failed of hearing a *ſincere* and *believing* prayer; and thoſe promiſes for ever hold good, "Aſk, and ye ſhall "receive; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be "opened to you: for every one that aſketh, receiveth; and "he that ſeeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it "ſhall be opened."

2. The *ſecond uſe* may be, of reproof to thoſe that neglect the duty of prayer. If we enjoy ſo great a privilege as to have the true God, who is a prayer-hearing God, revealed to us, how great will be our folly and inexcuſableneſs, if we neglect the privilege, make no uſe of it, and deprive ourſelves of the advantage of it, by not ſeeking this God by prayer. They are hereby reproved who neglect the great duty of ſecret prayer, which is more expreſsly required in the word of God than any other kind of prayer. What account can thoſe perſons give of themſelves, who neglect ſo known a duty? It is impoſſible that any among us ſhould be ignorant of this command of God. How daring, therefore, is their wickedneſs who live in the neglect of this duty, if any ſuch there be among us! and what can they anſwer

to their Judge, when he ſhall call them to an account for it?

Here I ſhall briefly ſay ſomething to an EXCUSE which ſome may be ready to make for themſelves. Some may be ready to ſay, *If I do pray, my prayer will not be the prayer of faith, becauſe I am in a natural condition, and have no faith.*

Anſ. 1. This excuſes not from obedience to a plain command of God. The command is to all to whom the command ſhall come. God not only directs godly perſons to pray, but others alſo. In the beginning of the ſecond chapter of Proverbs, God directs all perſons to cry after wiſdom, and to lift up their voices for underſtanding, in order to their obtaining the fear and knowledge of God; and in Jam. i. 5. the apoſtle ſays, "If any man lack wiſdom, let "him aſk it of God;" and Peter directed *Simon Magus* to repent and pray God, if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven him, Acts viii. 22. Therefore, when God ſays, do thus or thus, it is not for us to make excuſes, but we muſt do the thing required.

Anſ. 2. God is pleaſed ſometimes to anſwer the prayers of unbelievers. Indeed he hears not their prayers from any goodneſs or acceptableneſs that there is in their prayers, or becauſe of any true reſpect to him manifeſted in them, for there is none; nor has he obliged himſelf to anſwer ſuch prayers; yet he is pleaſed ſometimes, of his ſovereign mercy, to pity wicked men, and hear their cries. Thus he heard the cries of the Ninevites, Jonah, chap. 3. So he heard the prayer of Ahad, 1 Kings xxi. 27. 28.

Though there be no regard to God in their prayers, yet God, of his infinite grace, is pleaſed to have reſpect to their deſires of their own happineſs, and to grant their requeſts. God may, and ſometimes does, hear the cries of wicked men, as he hears the hungry ravens, when they cry, Pſal. cxlvii. 9. and as he opens his bountiful hand, and ſatisfies the deſires of every living thing, Pſal. cxlv. 16. Beſides, the prayers of ſinners, though they have no goodneſs in them, yet are made a means of a preparation for mercy.

3. The *laſt uſe* ſhall be of exhortation. Seeing we have ſuch a prayer-hearing God as we have heard, let us be much employed in the duty of prayer: let us pray with all prayer and ſupplication: let us live prayerful lives, continuing inſtant in prayer, watching thereunto with all perſeverance; praying without ceaſing, praying always, and not fainting; and not praying in a dull, cold, and lifeleſs manner,

ner, but *wreſtling* with God in prayer. I ſhall particularly at this time exhort to two things.

(1.) Let us pray for others, as well as for ourſelves. God hath in his word manifeſted himſelf to be eſpecially well pleaſed with hearty interceſſory prayers, or prayers for our fellow-creatures: 1 Tim. ii. 1. 2. 3. "I exhort, therefore, "that firſt of all, ſupplications, prayers, interceſſions, and "giving of thanks, be made for *all men*; for kings, &c.; for "this is good and acceptable in the ſight of God our Sa-"viour." It is eſpecially acceptable to God, as ſuch prayers, when ſincere, are an expreſſion of a ſpirit of Chriſtian charity, which is a grace peculiarly becoming Chriſtians, and acceptable to God, as may be ſeen by what is ſaid of it in 1 Cor. xiii.

(2.) Let us eſpecially be earneſt with God in our prayers, for the outpouring of his Spirit both on ourſelves and others. We have not ſuch encouragement in ſcripture to pray for any other bleſſing, as we have to pray for this bleſſing. It is the greateſt of all mercies; yet God hath given ſuch encouragement to pray for no other mercy, as he hath for this mercy. See Luke xi. 13. "If ye then, being evil, know "how to give good gifts unto your children, how much "more ſhall your heavenly Father *give the Holy Spirit* to "them that aſk him?" Though it be the greateſt mercy, yet God is moſt ready to beſtow it of any whatſoever. We ought therefore moſt earneſtly to pray for the outpouring of God's Spirit on our own ſouls, on others in whom we are particularly concerned, on the people among whom we dwell, and on the whole land and whole earth. We are directed to pray for this with the greateſt poſſible importunity in the fore-mentioned place, Iſa. lxii. 6. 7. "Ye "that make mention of the Lord, keep not ſilence, and "give him no reſt, till he make Jeruſalem a praiſe in the "earth."

SER-

SERMON VII*.

Great Care neceſſary, leſt we live in ſome way of Sin.

PSALM, cxxxix. 23. 24.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and ſee if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlaſting.

THIS pſalm is a meditation on the omniſcience of God, or upon his perfect view and knowledge of every thing, which the Pſalmiſt repreſents by that perfect knowledge which God had of all his actions, his downſitting and his upriſing; and of his thoughts, ſo that he knew his thoughts afar off; and of his words, "There is not a word in my "tongue," ſays the Pſalmiſt, "but thou knoweſt it altoge-"ther." Then he repreſents it by the impoſſibility of flee-ing from the divine preſence, or of hiding from him; ſo that if he ſhould go into heaven, or hide himſelf in hell, or fly to the uttermoſt parts of the ſea; yet he would not be hid from God: or if he ſhould endeavour to hide himſelf in darkneſs, yet that would not cover him; but the darkneſs and light are both alike to him.

Then he repreſents it by the knowledge which God had of him while in his mother's womb, verſ. 15. 16. "My "ſubſtance was not hid from thee, when I was made in ſe-"cret; thine eyes did ſee my ſubſtance, yet being imper-"fect; and in thy book all my members were written."

After this the Pſalmiſt obſerves what muſt be inferred as a neceſſary conſequence of this omniſcience of God, viz. that he will ſlay the wicked, ſince he ſeeth all their wicked-neſs, and nothing of it is hid from him. And laſt of all, the Pſalmiſt improves this meditation upon God's all-ſeeing

* Dated September 1733.

eye,

eye, in begging of God that he would ſearch and try him, to ſee if there were any wicked way in him, and lead him in the way everlaſting.

Three things may be noted in the words.

1. The act of mercy which the Pſalmiſt implores of God towards himſelf, viz. that God would ſearch him, "Search "me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my "thoughts."

2. In what reſpect he deſires to be ſearched, viz. "to ſee "if there were any wicked way in him." We are not to underſtand by it, that the Pſalmiſt means that God ſhould ſearch him for his own information. What he had ſaid before, of God's knowing all things, implies that he hath no need of that. The Pſalmiſt had ſaid, in the ſecond verſe, that God underſtood his thought afar off; i. e. it was all plain before him, he ſaw it without difficulty, or without being forced to come nigh, and diligently to obſerve. That which is plain to be ſeen, may be ſeen at a diſtance.

Therefore, when the Pſalmiſt prays that God would ſearch him, to ſee if there were any wicked way in him, he cannot mean, that he ſhould ſearch that he himſelf might ſee or be informed, but that the *Pſalmiſt* might ſee and be informed. He prays that God would ſearch him by his diſcovering light; that he would lead him thoroughly to diſcern himſelf, and ſee whether there were any wicked way in him. Such figurative expreſſions are often uſed in ſcripture. The word of God is ſaid to be a diſcerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Not that the word itſelf diſcerns, but it ſearches and opens our hearts to view; ſo that it enables us to diſcern the temper and deſires of our hearts. So God is often ſaid to *try* men. He doth not try them for his own information, but for the diſcovery and manifeſtation of them to themſelves or others.

3. Obſerve to what end he thus deſires God to ſearch him, viz. "That he might be led in the way everlaſting;" i. e. not only in a way which may have a ſpecious ſhow, and appear right to him for a while, and in which he may have peace and quietneſs for the preſent; but in the way which will hold, which will ſtand the teſt, which he may confidently abide by for ever, and always approve of as good and right, and in which he may always have peace and joy. It is ſaid, that "the way of the ungodly ſhall periſh," Pſal. i. 6.

In

In oppoſition to this, the way of the righteous is in the text ſaid *to laſt for ever.*

DOCTRINE. All men ſhould be much concerned to know, whether they do not live in ſome way of ſin.

David was much concerned to know this concerning himſelf: he ſearched himſelf, he examined his own heart and ways; but he did not truſt to that; he was ſtill afraid leſt there might be ſome wicked way in him, which had eſcaped his notice: therefore he cries to God to ſearch him. And his earneſtneſs appears in the frequent repetition of the ſame requeſt in different words: *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts.* He was very earneſt to know whether there were not ſome evil way or other in him, in which he went on, and did not take notice of it.

1. We ought to be much concerned to know whether we do not live in a *ſtate of ſin.* All unregenerate men live in ſin. We are born under the power and dominion of ſin, are ſold under ſin; every unconverted ſinner is a devoted ſervant to ſin and Satan. We ſhould look upon it as of the greateſt importance to us, to know in what ſtate we are, whether we ever had any change made in our hearts from ſin to holineſs, or whether we be not ſtill in the gall of bitterneſs and bond of iniquity; whether ever ſin were truly mortified in us; whether we do not live in the ſin of unbelief, and in the rejection of the Saviour. This is what the apoſtle inſiſts upon with the Corinthians, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine yourſelves, whether ye be in the faith; prove "your own ſelves; know ye not your own ſelves, how that "Jeſus Chriſt is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

Thoſe who entertain the opinion and hope of themſelves, that they are godly, ſhould take great care to ſee that their foundation be right. Thoſe that are in doubt ſhould not give themſelves reſt till the matter be reſolved.

Every unconverted perſon lives in a *ſinful way.* He not only lives in a particular evil practice, but the whole courſe of his life is ſinful. The imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually. He not only doth evil, but he doth no good, Pſal. xiv. 3. "They are altogether "become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no not "one." Sin is an unconverted man's trade; it is the work and buſineſs of his life; for he is the ſervant of ſin. And ordinarily

ordinarily hypocrites, or thoſe who are wicked men, and yet think themſelves godly, and make a profeſſion accordingly, are eſpecially odious and abominable to God.

2. We ought to be much concerned to know whether we do not live in ſome particular way which is offenſive and diſpleaſing to God: This is what I principally intend in the doctrine. We ought to be much concerned to know whether we do not live in the gratification of ſome luſt, either in practice or in our thoughts; whether we do not live in the omiſſion of ſome duty, ſome thing which God expects we ſhould do; whether we do not go into ſome practice or manner of behaviour, which is not warrantable. We ſhould inquire whether we do not live in ſome practice which is againſt our light, and whether we do not allow ourſelves in known ſins.

We ſhould be ſtrict to inquire whether or no we have not hitherto allowed ourſelves in ſome or other ſinful way, thro' wrong principles and miſtaken notions of our duty: Whether we have not lived in the practice of ſome things offenſive to God, through want of care, and watchfulneſs, and obſervation of ourſelves. We ſhould be concerned to know whether we live not in ſome way which doth not become the profeſſion we make; and whether our practice in ſome things be not unbecoming Chriſtians, contrary to Chriſtian rules, not ſuitable for the diſciples and followers of the Holy Jeſus, the Lamb of God. We ought to be concerned to know this, becauſe,

(1.) God requires of us, that we exerciſe the utmoſt watchfulneſs and diligence in his ſervice. Reaſon teaches, that it is our duty to exerciſe the utmoſt care, that we may know the mind and will of God, and our duty in all the branches of it, and to uſe our utmoſt diligence in every thing to do it; becauſe the ſervice of God is the great buſineſs of our lives, it is that work which is the end of our beings; and God is worthy, that we ſhould ſerve him to the utmoſt of our power in all things. This is what God often expreſsly requires of us; Deut. iv. 9. "Take heed to thy-"ſelf, and keep thy ſoul diligently, leſt thou forget the "things that thine eyes have ſeen, and leſt they depart "from thy heart all the days of thy life." And, v. 15. 16. "Take ye therefore good heed to yourſelves, leſt ye cor-"rupt yourſelves." And, Deut. vi. 17. "You ſhall dili-"gently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, "and his teſtimonies, and his ſtatutes which he hath com-

" manded thee." And, Prov. iv. 23. " Keep thy heart " with all diligence; for out of it are the iſſues of life."

So we are commanded by Chriſt to *watch and pray*; Matth. xxvi. 41.; and Luke xxi. 34. 36. " Take heed to " yourſelves, leſt at any time your hearts be overcharged " with ſurfeiting, and drunkenneſs, and the cares of this " life." Eph. v. 15. " See that ye walk circumſpectly."

So that if we be found in any evil way whatſoever, it will not excuſe us that it was through inadvertence, or that we were not aware of it; as long as it is through want of that care and watchfulneſs in us, which we ought to have maintained.

(2.) If we live in any way of ſin, we live in a way whereby God is diſhonoured; but the honour of God ought to be ſupremely regarded by all. If every one would make it his great care in all things to obey God, to live juſtly and holily, to walk in every thing according to Chriſtian rules; and would maintain a ſtrict, watchful, and ſcrutinous eye over himſelf, to ſee if there were no wicked way in him; would give diligence to amend whatſoever is amiſs; would avoid every unholy, unchriſtian, and ſinful way; and if the practice of all were univerſally as becometh Chriſtians, how greatly would this be to the glory of God, and of Jeſus Chriſt! How greatly would it be to the credit and honour of religion! How would it tend to excite an high eſteem of religion in ſpectators, and to recommend an holy life! How would it ſtop the mouths of objectors and oppoſers! How beautiful and amiable would religion then appear, when exemplified and holden forth in the lives of Chriſtians, not maimed and mutilated, but whole and entire, as it were in its true ſhape, having all its parts and its proper beauty! Religion would then appear to be an amiable thing indeed.

If thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians generally, thus walked in all the paths of virtue and holineſs, it would tend more to the advancement of the kingdom of Chriſt in the world, the conviction of ſinners, and the propagation of religion among unbelievers, than all the ſermons in the world, ſo long as the lives of thoſe who are called Chriſtians are as they are now.

For want of this concern and watchfulneſs in the degree in which it ought to take place, many truly godly perſons adorn not their profeſſion as they ought to do, and, on the contrary, in ſome things diſhonour it For want of being ſo much concerned as they ought to be, to know whether

they

they do not walk in ſome way that is unbecoming a Chriſtian, and offenſive to God; their behaviour in ſome things is very unlovely, and ſuch as is an offence and ſtumbling-block to others, and gives occaſion to the enemy to blaſpheme.

(3.) We ſhould be much concerned to know whether we do not live in ſome way of ſin, as we would regard our own intereſt If we live in any way of ſin, it will be exceedingly to our hurt. Sin, as it is the moſt hateful evil, it is that which is moſt prejudicial to our intereſt, and tends moſt to our hurt of any thing in the world. If we live in any way that is diſpleaſing to God, it may be the ruin of our ſouls. Though men reform all other wicked practices, yet if they live in but one ſinful way, which they do not forſake, it may prove their everlaſting undoing.

If we live in any way of ſin, we ſhall thereby provoke God to anger, and bring guilt upon our own ſouls. Neither will it excuſe us, that we were not ſenſible how evil that way was in which we walked; that we did not conſider it; that we were blind as to any evil in it. We contract guilt not only by living in thoſe ways which we know, but in thoſe which we might know to be ſinful, if we were but ſufficiently concerned to know what is ſinful and what not, and to examine ourſelves, and ſearch our own hearts and ways. If we walk in ſome evil way, and know it not for want of watchfulneſs and conſideration, that will not excuſe us; for we ought to have watched and conſidered, and made the moſt diligent inquiry.

If we walk in ſome evil way, it will be a great prejudice to us in this world. We ſhall thereby be deprived of that comfort which we otherwiſe might enjoy, and ſhall expoſe ourſelves to a great deal of ſoul trouble, and ſorrow, and darkneſs, which otherwiſe we might have been free from. A wicked way is the original way of pain or grief. In it we ſhall expoſe ourſelves to the judgements of God, even in this world; and we ſhall be great loſers by it, in reſpect to our eternal intereſt; and that though we may not live in a way of ſin wilfully, and with a deliberate reſolution, but careleſsly, and through the deceitfulneſs of our corruptions. However we ſhall offend God, and prevent the flouriſhing of grace in our hearts, if not the very being of it.

Many are very careful that they do not proceed in miſtakes, where their temporal intereſt is concerned. They

will be ſtrictly careful that they be not led on blindfold in the bargains which they make; in their traffic one with another, they are careful to have their eyes about them, and to ſee that they go ſafely in theſe caſes; and why not, where the intereſt of their ſouls is concerned?

(4.) We ſhould be much concerned to know whether we do not live in ſome way of ſin, becauſe we are exceedingly prone to walk in ſome ſuch way.——The heart of man is naturally prone to ſin; the weight of the ſoul is naturally that way, as the ſtone by its weight tendeth downwards. And there is very much of a remaining proneneſs to ſin in the ſaints. Though ſin be mortified in them, yet there is a body of ſin and death remaining; there are all manner of luſts and corrupt inclinations. We are exceeding apt to get into ſome ill path or other. Man is ſo prone to ſinful ways, that without maintaining a conſtant ſtrict watch over himſelf, no other can be expected than that he will walk in ſome way of ſin.

Our hearts are ſo full of ſin, that they are ready to betray us. That to which men are prone, they are apt to get into before they are aware. Sin is apt to ſteal in upon us unawares. Beſides this, we live in a world where we continually meet with temptations; we walk in the midſt of ſnares; and the devil, a ſubtile adverſary, is continually watching over us, endeavouring, by all manner of wiles and devices, to lead us aſtray into by-paths. 2 Cor. xi. 2. 3. "I am jealous over you. I fear, leſt by any means, as "the ſerpent beguiled Eve through his ſubtilty; ſo your "minds ſhould be corrupted from the ſimplicity that is "in Chriſt." 1 Pet. v. 8. "Be ſober, be vigilant; becauſe "your adverſary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh a"bout, ſeeking whom he may devour."——Theſe things ſhould make us the more jealous of ourſelves.

(5.) We ought to be concerned to know whether we do not live in ſome way of ſin; becauſe there are many who live in ſuch ways, and do not conſider it, or are not ſenſible of it. It is a thing of great importance that we ſhould know it, and yet the knowledge is not to be acquired without difficulty. Many live in ways which are offenſive to God, who are not ſenſible of it. They are ſtrangely blinded in this caſe. Pſal. xix. 12. "Who can underſtand his er"rors? Cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults." By ſecret faults, the Pſalmiſt means thoſe which are ſecret to himſelf, thoſe ſins which were in him, or which he was guilty of, and yet was not aware of.

That

That the knowing whether we do not live in ſome way of ſin is attended with difficulty, is not becauſe the rules of judging in ſuch a caſe are not plain or plentiful. God hath abundantly taught us what we ought, and what we ought not to do; and the rules by which we are to walk are often ſet before us in the preaching of the word. So that the difficulty of knowing whether there be any wicked way in us, is not for want of external light, or for want of God's having told us plainly and abundantly what are wicked ways. But that many perſons live in ways which are diſpleaſing to God, and yet are not ſenſible of it, may ariſe from the following things.

1. From the blinding deceitful nature of ſin. The heart of man is full of ſin and corruption, and that corruption is of an exceeding darkening, blinding nature. Sin always carries a degree of darkneſs with it; and the more it prevails, the more it darkens and deludes the mind.——It is from hence that the knowing whether there be any wicked way in us is a difficult thing. The difficulty is not at all for want of light without us, not at all becauſe the word of God is not plain or the rules not clear; but it is becauſe of the darkneſs within us. The light ſhines clear enough around us, but the fault is in our eyes; they are dim, are darkened and blinded by a pernicious diſtemper.

Sin is of a deceitful nature, becauſe, ſo far as it prevails, ſo far it gains the inclination and will, and that ſways and biaſſes the judgement. So far as any luſt prevails, ſo far it biaſſes the mind to approve of it. So far as any ſin ſways the inclination or will, ſo far that ſin ſeems pleaſing and good to the man: and that which is pleaſing, the mind is prejudiced to think is right.——Hence when any luſt hath ſo gained upon a man, as to get him into a ſinful way or practice; it having gained his will, alſo prejudices his underſtanding. And the more irregularly a man walks, the more will his mind probably be darkened and blinded; becauſe by ſo much the more doth ſin prevail.

Hence many men who live in ways which are not agreeable to the rules of God's word, yet are not ſenſible of it; and it is a difficult thing to make them ſenſible of it; becauſe the ſame luſt that leads them into that evil way, blinds them in it.——Thus, if a man live in a way of malice or envy, the more malice or envy prevails, the more will it blind his underſtanding to approve of it. The more a man hates his neighbour, the more will he be diſpoſed to think that he has juſt cauſe to hate him, and that his neighbour

neighbour is hateful, and deſerves to be hated, and that it is not his duty to love him. So if a man live in any way of laſciviouſneſs, the more his impure luſt prevails, the more ſweet and pleaſant will it make the ſin appear, and ſo the more will he be diſpoſed and prejudiced to think there is no evil in it.

So the more a man lives in a way of covetouſneſs, or the more inordinately he deſires the profits of the world, the more will he think himſelf excuſable in ſo doing, and the more will he think that he has a neceſſity of thoſe things, and cannot do without them. And if they be neceſſary, then he is excuſable for eagerly deſiring them. The ſame might be ſhown of all the luſts which are in men's hearts. By how much the more they prevail, by ſo much the more do they blind the mind, and diſpoſe the judgement to approve of them. All luſts are deceitful luſts. Eph. iv. 22. "That ye put off, concerning the former converſation, the "old man which is corrupt according to the *deceitful luſts*." And even godly men may for a time be blinded and deluded by a luſt, ſo far as to live in a way which is diſpleaſing to God.

The luſts of mens hearts, prejudicing them in favour of ſinful practices, to which thoſe luſts tend, and in which they delight; this ſtirs up carnal reaſon, and puts men, with all the ſubtilty of which they are capable, to invent pleas and arguments to juſtify ſuch practices. When men are very ſtrongly inclined and tempted to any wicked practice, and conſcience troubles them about it, they will rack their brains to find out arguments to ſtop the mouth of conſcience, and to make themſelves believe that they may lawfully proceed in that practice.

When men have entered upon an ill practice, and proceeded in it, then their ſelf-love prejudices them to approve of it. Men do not love to condemn themſelves; they are prone to flatter themſelves, and are prejudiced in their own favour, and in favour of whatever is found in themſelves. Hence they will find out good names, by which to call their evil diſpoſitions and practices; they will make them virtuous, or at leaſt will make them innocent. Their covetouſneſs they will call prudence and diligence in buſineſs. If they rejoice at another's calamity, they pretend it is becauſe they hope it will do him good, and will humble him. If they indulge in exceſſive drinking, it is becauſe their conſtitutions require it. If they talk againſt and backbite their neighbour, they call it zeal againſt ſin; it is becauſe they

they would bear a teſtimony againſt ſuch wickedneſs. If they ſet up their wills to oppoſe others in public affairs, then they call their wilfulneſs conſcience, or reſpect to the public good.——Thus they find good names for all their evil ways.

Men are very apt to bring their principles to their practices, and not their practices to their principles, as they ought to do. They, in their practice, comply not with their conſciences; but all their ſtrife is to bring their conſciences to comply with their practice.

On the account of this deceitfulneſs of ſin, and becauſe we have ſo much ſin dwelling in our hearts, it is a difficult thing to paſs a true judgement on our own ways and practices. On this account we ſhould make diligent ſearch, and be much concerned to know whether there be not ſome wicked way in us. Heb. iii. 12. 13. "Take heed, brethren, "leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in "departing from the living God. But exhort one another "daily, while it is called to-day, leſt any of you be har-"dened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin."

Men can more eaſily ſee faults in others than they can in themſelves. When they ſee others out of the way, they will preſently condemn them, when perhaps they do, or have done the ſame, or the like themſelves, and in themſelves juſtify it. Men can diſcern motes in others eyes, better than they can beams in their own. Prov. xxi. 2. "Every way of man is right in his own eyes." The heart in this matter is exceedingly deceitful. Jer. xvii. 9. "The "heart is deceitful above all things and deſperately wicked: "Who can know it?" We ought not therefore to truſt in our own hearts in this matter, but to keep a jealous eye on ourſelves, to be prying into our own hearts and ways, and to cry to God that he would ſearch us. Prov. xxviii. 26. "He that truſteth his own heart is a fool."

2. Satan alſo ſets in with our deceitful luſts, and labours to blind us in this matter. He is continually endeavouring to lead us into ſinful ways, and ſets in with carnal reaſon to flatter us in ſuch ways, and to blind the conſcience. He is the prince of darkneſs; he labours to blind and deceive; it hath been his work ever ſince he began it with our firſt parents.

3. Sometimes men are not ſenſible, becauſe they are ſtupified through cuſtom. Cuſtom in an evil practice ſtupifies the mind, ſo that it makes any way of ſin, which at

firſt was offenſive to conſcience, after a while, to ſeem harmleſs.

4. Sometimes perſons live in ways of ſin, and are not ſenſible of it, becauſe they are blinded by common cuſtom, and the examples of others. There are ſo many who go into the practice, and it is ſo common a cuſtom, that it is eſteemed little or no diſcredit to a man; it is little teſtified againſt. This cauſes ſome things to appear innocent, which are very diſpleaſing to God, and abominable in his ſight. Perhaps we ſee them practiſed by thoſe of whom we have an high eſteem, by our ſuperiors, and thoſe who are accounted wiſe men. This greatly prepoſſeſſes the mind in favour of them, and takes off the ſenſe of their evil. Or if they be obſerved to be commonly practiſed by thoſe who are accounted godly men, men of experience in religion, this tends greatly to harden the heart, and blind the mind with reſpect to any evil practice.

5. Perſons are in great danger of living in ways of ſin and not being ſenſible of it, for want of duly regarding and conſidering their duty in the full extent of it. There are ſome who hear of the neceſſity of reforming from all ſins, and attending all duties, and will ſet themſelves to perform ſome particular duties, at the ſame time neglecting others. Perhaps their thoughts will be wholly taken up about religious duties, ſuch as prayer in ſecret, reading the ſcriptures, and other good books, going to public worſhip and giving diligent attention, keeping the ſabbath, and ſerious meditation. They ſeem to regard theſe things, as though they compriſed their duty in its full extent, and as if this were their whole work; and moral duties towards their neighbours, their duties in the relations in which they ſtand, their duties as huſbands or wives, as brethren or ſiſters, or their duties as neighbours, ſeem not to be conſidered by them.

They conſider not the neceſſity of thoſe things: and when they hear of earneſtly ſeeking ſalvation in a way of diligent attendance on all duties, they ſeem to leave thoſe out of their thoughts, as if they were not meant; nor any other duties, except reading, and praying, and keeping the ſabbath, and the like. Or if they do regard ſome parts of their moral duty, it may be other branches of it are not conſidered. Thus if they be juſt in their dealings, yet perhaps they neglect deeds of charity. They know they muſt not defraud their neighbour; they muſt not lie; they muſt not commit

commit uncleanneſs; but ſeem not to conſider what an evil it is to talk againſt others lightly, or to take up a reproach againſt them, or to contend and quarrel with them, or to live contrary to the rules of the goſpel in their family-relations, or not to inſtruct their children or ſervants.

Many men ſeem to be very conſcientious in ſome things, in ſome branches of their duty on which they keep their eye, when other important branches are entirely neglected, and ſeem not to be noticed by them. They regard not their duty in the full extent of it.

SERMON VIII.

Great Care neceſſary, leſt we live in ſome way of Sin.

PSALM, CXXXIX. 23. 24.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and ſee if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlaſting.

DOCTRINE. ALL men ſhould be much concerned to know whether they do not live in ſome way of ſin.

Having already ſaid what we propoſed directly upon this doctrine, I now proceed to the

APPLICATION.

The uſe I ſhall make of this doctrine is, to ſtir up in you the concern of which I have been ſpeaking, and to lead you to a ſtrict inquiry, whether you do not live in ſome way of ſin.—— 1. I ſhall propoſe ſome directions for you to follow, that you may diſcover whether you do not live in ſome way of ſin. 2. I ſhall mention ſome particulars, concerning which you may examine yourſelves, in order to know whether you do not live in ſome way of ſin. 3. I ſhall mention ſome things which ſhow the importance of knowing and forſaking the ways of ſin in which you live.

I. I ſhall ſhow what method you ought to take, in order to find out whether you do not live in ſome way of ſin.— This, as hath been obſerved, is a difficult thing to be known; but it is not a matter of ſo much difficulty, but that if perſons were ſufficiently concerned about it, and ſtrict and thorough

rough in inquiring and ſearching, it might, for the moſt part, be diſcovered; men might know whether they live in any way of ſin, or not. Perſons who are deeply concerned to pleaſe and obey God, need not, under the light we enjoy, go on in ways of ſin, through ignorance.

It is true, that our hearts are exceedingly deceitful; but God, in his holy word, hath given that light with reſpect to our duty, which is accommodated to the ſtate of darkneſs in which we are. So that by thorough care and inquiry, we may know our duty, and know whether or no we live in any ſinful way. And every one who hath any true love to God and his duty, will be glad to have any aſſiſtance in this inquiry. It is with ſuch perſons a concern which lies with much weight upon their ſpirits, in all things to walk as God would have them, and ſo as to pleaſe and honour him. If they live in any way which is offenſive to God, they will be glad to know it, and do by no means chuſe to have it concealed from them.

All thoſe alſo, who in good earneſt make the inquiry, *What ſhall I do to be ſaved?* will be glad to know whether they do not live in ſome ſinful way of behaviour. For if they live in any ſuch way, it is a great diſadvantage to them with reſpect to that great concern. It behoves every one who is ſeeking ſalvation, to know and avoid every ſinful way in which he lives. The means by which we muſt come to the knowledge of this, are two; viz. the knowledge of the rule, and the knowledge of ourſelves.

1*ſt*, If we would know whether we do not live in ſome way of ſin, we ſhould take a great deal of pains to be thoroughly acquainted with the rule.——God hath given us a true and perfect rule by which we ought to walk. And that we might be able, notwithſtanding our darkneſs, and the diſadvantages which attend us, to know our duty; he hath laid the rule before us abundantly. What a full and abundant revelation of the mind of God have we in the ſcriptures! And how plain is it in what relates to practice! How often are rules repeated! In how many various forms are they revealed, that we might the more fully underſtand them!

But to what purpoſe will all this care of God to inform us be, if we neglect the revelation which God hath made of his mind, and take no care to become acquainted with it? It is impoſſible that we ſhould know whether we do not live in a way of ſin, unleſs we know the rule by which we are to walk. The ſinfulneſs of any way conſiſts in its diſa-

greement from the rule; and we cannot know whether it agree with the rule or not, unleſs we be acquainted with the rule. Rom. iii. 20. "By the law is the knowledge of "ſin."

Therefore, leſt we go in ways diſpleaſing to God, we ought with the greateſt diligence to ſtudy the rules which God hath given us. We ought to read and ſearch the Holy Scriptures much, and to do it with the deſign to know the whole of our duty, and in order that the word of God may be "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our "paths" Pſal. cxix. 105. Every one ought to ſtrive to get knowledge in divine things, and to grow in ſuch knowledge to the end that he may know his duty, and know what God would have him to do.

Theſe things being ſo, are not the greater part of men very much to blame in that they take no more pains or care to acquire the knowledge of divine things? in that they no more ſtudy the Holy Scriptures, and other books which might inform them? as if it were the work of miniſters only, to take pains to acquire this knowledge. But why is it ſo much a miniſter's work to ſtrive after knowledge, unleſs it be, that others may acquire knowledge by him?——Will not many be found inexcuſable in the ſinful ways in which they live through ignorance and miſtake, becauſe their ignorance is a wilful, allowed ignorance? They are ignorant of their duty, but it is their own fault that they are ſo; they have advantages enough to know, and may know it if they will; but they take no pains to acquire knowledge in ſuch things. They are careful to acquire knowledge, and to be well ſkilled in their outward affairs, upon which their temporal intereſt depends; but will not take pains to know their duty.

We ought to take great pains to be well informed, eſpecially in thoſe things which eſpecially concern us, or which relate to our particular caſes.

2dly, The other mean is the knowledge of ourſelves, as ſubject to the rule.——If we would know whether we do not live in ſome way of ſin, we ſhould take the utmoſt care to be well acquainted with ourſelves, as well as with the rule, that we may be able to compare ourſelves with the rule. When we have found what the rule is, then we ſhould be ſtrict in examining ourſelves, whether or no we be conformed to the rule. This is the direct way in which our characters are to be diſcovered. It is one thing wherein man differs from brute creatures, that he is capable of ſelf-reflection, or of reflecting upon his own actions, and what

what paſſes in his own mind, and conſidering the nature and quality of them. And doubtleſs it was partly for this end that God gave us this power, which is denied to other creatures, that we might know ourſelves, and conſider our own ways.

We ſhould examine our hearts and ways, until we have ſatisfactorily diſcovered either their agreement or diſagreement with the rules of ſcripture. This is a matter that requires the utmoſt diligence, leſt we overlook our own irregularities, leſt ſome evil way in us ſhould lie hid under ſome diſguiſe, and paſs unobſerved. One would think we are under greater advantages to be acquainted with ourſelves, than with any thing elſe; for we are always preſent with ourſelves, and have an immediate conſciouſneſs of our own actions: All that paſſeth in us, or is done by us, is immediately under our eye. Yet really in ſome reſpects the knowledge of nothing is ſo difficult to be obtained, as the knowledge of ourſelves. We ſhould therefore uſe great diligence in prying into the ſecrets of our hearts, and in examining all our ways and practices. That you may the more ſucceſsfully uſe thoſe means to know whether you do not live in ſome way of ſin; be adviſed,

1. Evermore to join ſelf-reflection with reading and hearing the word of God. When you read or hear, reflect on yourſelves as you go along, comparing yourſelves and your own ways with what you read or hear. Reflect and conſider what agreement or diſagreement there is between the word and your ways. The Scriptures teſtify againſt all manner of ſin, and contain directions for every duty; as the apoſtle ſaith, 2 Tim. iii. 16. "And is profitable for "doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in "righteouſneſs." Therefore when you there read the rules given us by Chriſt and his apoſtles, reflect and conſider, each one of you with himſelf, Do I live according to this rule? Or do I live in any reſpect contrary to it?

When you read in the hiſtorical parts of Scripture an account of the ſins of which others have been guilty, reflect on yourſelves as you go along, and inquire whether you do not in ſome degree live in the ſame or like practices. When you there read accounts how God reproved the ſins of others, and executed judgements upon them for their ſins, examine whether you be not guilty of things of the ſame nature. When you read the examples of Chriſt, and of the ſaints recorded in ſcripture, inquire whether you do not

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live in ways contrary to thoſe examples. When you read there how God commended and rewarded any perſons for their virtues and good deeds, enquire whether you perform thoſe duties for which they were commended and rewarded, or whether you do not live in the contrary ſins or vices. Let me further direct you, particularly to read the ſcriptures to theſe ends, that you may compare and examine yourſelves in the manner now mentioned.

So if you would know whether you do not live in ſome way of ſin, whenever you hear any ſin teſtified againſt, or any duty urged, in the preaching of the word, be careful to look back upon yourſelves, to compare yourſelves and your own ways with what you hear, and ſtrictly examine yourſelves, whether you live in this or the other ſinful way which you hear teſtified againſt; and whether you do this duty which you hear urged. Make uſe of the word as a glaſs, wherein you may behold yourſelves.

How few are there who do this as they ought to do! who, while the miniſter is teſtifying againſt ſin, are buſy with themſelves in examining their own hearts and ways! The generality rather think of others, how this or that perſon lives in a manner contrary to what is preached; ſo that there may be hundreds of things delivered in the preaching of the word, which properly belong to them, and are well ſuited to their caſes; yet it never ſo much as comes into their minds, that what is delivered any way concerns them. Their minds readily fix upon others, and they can charge others, but never think with themſelves whether or no they be the perſons.

2. If you live in any ways which are generally condemned by the better, and more ſober ſort of men, be eſpecially careful to inquire concerning theſe, whether they be not ways of ſin. Perhaps you have argued with yourſelves, that ſuch or ſuch a practice is lawful; you cannot ſee any evil in it. However, if it be generally condemned by godly miniſters, and the better and more pious ſort of people, it certainly looks ſuſpiciouſly, whether or no there be not ſome evil in it; ſo that you may well be put upon inquiring with the utmoſt ſtrictneſs, whether it be not ſinful. The practice being ſo generally diſapproved of by thoſe who in ſuch caſes are moſt likely to be in the right, may reaſonably put you upon more than ordinarily nice and diligent inquiry concerning the lawfulneſs or unlawfulneſs of it.

3. Examine yourſelves, whether all the ways in which you live, are likely to be pleaſant to think of upon a death-

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bed. Perſons often in health allow and plead for thoſe things, which they would not dare to do, if they looked upon themſelves as ſhortly about to go out of the world. They in a great meaſure ſtill their conſciences as to ways in which they walk, and keep them pretty eaſy, while death is thought of as at a diſtance: Yet reflections on theſe ſame ways are very uncomfortable when they are going out of the world. Conſcience is not ſo eaſily blinded and muffled then as at other times.

Conſider therefore and inquire diligently whether or no you do not live in ſome practice or other, as to the lawfulneſs of which, when it ſhall come into your minds upon your deathbed, you will chuſe to have ſome further ſatisfaction, and ſome better argument than you now have, to prove that it is not ſinful, in order to your being eaſy about it. Think over your particular ways, and try yourſelves, with the awful expectation of ſoon going out of the world into eternity, and earneſtly endeavour impartially to judge what ways you will on a deathbed approve of and rejoice in, and what you will diſapprove of, and wiſh you had let alone.

4. Be adviſed to conſider what others ſay of you, and improve it to this end, to know whether you do not live in ſome way of ſin. Although men are blind to their own faults, yet they eaſily diſcover the faults of others, and are apt enough to ſpeak of them. Sometimes perſons live in ways which do not at all become them, yet are blind to it themſelves, not ſeeing the deformity of their own ways, while it is moſt plain and evident to others. They themſelves cannot ſee it, yet others cannot ſhut their eyes againſt it, cannot avoid ſeeing it.

For inſtance. Some perſons are of a very proud behaviour, and are not ſenſible of it; but it appears notorious to others. Some are of a very worldly ſpirit, they are ſet after the world, ſo as to be noted for it, ſo as to have a name for it; yet they ſeem not to be ſenſible of it themſelves. Some are of a very malicious and envious ſpirit; and others ſee it, and to them it appears very hateful; yet they themſelves do not reflect upon it. Therefore ſince there is no truſting to our own hearts and our own eyes in ſuch caſes, we ſhould make our improvement of what others ſay of us, obſerve what they charge us with, and what fault they find with us, and ſtrictly examine whether there be not foundation for it.

If others charge us with being proud; or worldly, cloſe, and niggardly; or ſpiteful and malicious; or with any other

ther ill temper or practice; we ſhould improve it in ſelf-reflection, to inquire whether it be not ſo. And though the imputation may ſeem to us to be very groundleſs, and we think that they, in charging us ſo and ſo, are influenced by no good ſpirit; yet if we act prudently, we ſhall take ſo much notice of it as to make it an occaſion of examining ourſelves.

Thus we ſhould improve what our friends ſay to us and of us, when they from friendſhip tell us of any thing which they obſerve amiſs in us. It is moſt imprudent, as well as moſt unchriſtian, to take it amiſs, and reſent it ill, when we are thus told of our faults: we ſhould rather rejoice in it, that we are ſhown the ſpots which are upon us. Thus alſo we ſhould improve what our enemies ſay of us. If they from an ill ſpirit reproach and revile us to our faces, we ſhould conſider it, ſo far as to reflect inward upon ourſelves, and inquire whether it be not ſo, as they charge us. For though what is ſaid, be ſaid in a reproachful, reviling manner; yet there may be too much truth in it. When men revile others even from an ill ſpirit towards them; yet they are likely to fix upon real faults; they are likely to fall upon us where we are weakeſt and moſt defective, and where we have given them moſt occaſion. An enemy will ſooneſt attack us where we can leaſt defend ourſelves: and a man that reviles us, though he do it from an unchriſtian ſpirit, and in an unchriſtian manner, yet will be moſt likely to ſpeak of that, for which we are really moſt to blame, and are moſt faulted by others.

So when we hear of others talking againſt us behind our backs, though they do very ill in ſo doing, yet the right improvement of it will be, to reflect upon ourſelves, and conſider whether we indeed have not thoſe faults which they lay to our charge. This will be a more chriſtian and a more wiſe improvement of it, than to be in a rage, to revile again, and to entertain an ill-will towards them for their evil-ſpeaking. This is the moſt wiſe and prudent improvement of ſuch things. Hereby we may get good out of evil; and this is the ſureſt way to defeat the deſigns of our enemies in reviling and backbiting us. They do it from ill will, and to do us an injury; but in this way we may turn it to our own good.

5. Be adviſed, when you ſee others faults, to examine whether there be not the ſame in yourſelves. This is not done by many, as is evident from this, that they are ſo ready to ſpeak of others faults, and aggravate them, when they have the very ſame themſelves. Thus, nothing is more common

common than for proud men to accuſe others of pride, and to declaim againſt them upon that account. So it is common for diſhoneſt men to complain of being wronged by others. When a perſon ſeeth ill diſpoſitions and practices in others, he is not under the ſame diſadvantage in ſeeing their odiouſneſs and deformity, as when he looks upon any ill diſpoſition or practice in himſelf. He can ſee how odious theſe and thoſe things are in others; he can eaſily ſee what an hateful thing pride is in another; and ſo of malice, and other evil diſpoſitions or practices. In others he can eaſily ſee their deformity; for he doth not look through ſuch a deceitful glaſs, as when he ſees the ſame things in himſelf.

Therefore, when you ſee others faults; when you take notice, how ſuch an one acts amiſs, what an ill ſpirit he ſhows, and how unſuitable his behaviour is; when you hear others ſpeak of it, and when you yourſelves find fault with others in their dealings with you, or in things wherein you are any way concerned with them; then reflect, and conſider, whether there be nothing of the ſame nature in yourſelves. Conſider that theſe things are juſt as deformed and hateful in you as they are in others. Pride, an haughty ſpirit and carriage, are as odious in you as they are in your neighbour. Your malicious and revengeful ſpirit towards your neighbour, is juſt as hateful as a malicious and revengeful ſpirit in him towards you. It is as unreaſonable for you to wrong, and to be diſhoneſt with your neighbour, as it is for him to be wrong and be diſhoneſt with you. It is as injurious and unchriſtian for you to talk againſt others behind their backs, as it is for others to do the ſame with reſpect to you.

6. Conſider the ways in which others are blinded as to the ſins in which they live, and ſtrictly inquire whether you be not blinded in the ſame ways. You are ſenſible that others are blinded by their luſts; conſider whether the prevalence of ſome carnal appetite or luſt of the mind have not blinded you. You ſee how others are blinded by their temporal intereſt; inquire whether your temporal intereſt do not blind you alſo in ſome things, ſo as to make you approve of things, and allow yourſelves in things which are not right. You are as liable to be blinded through inclination and intereſt, and have the ſame deceitful and wicked hearts as other men: Prov. xxvii. 19. "As in water face "anſwereth to face, ſo the heart of man to man."

II. I proceed now to the *ſecond* thing propoſed in the uſe of the doctrine, viz. to mention ſome particulars as to which it becomes you to examine yourſelves, that you may know whether you do not live in ſome way of ſin. I deſire all thoſe would ſtrictly examine themſelves in the following particulars, who are concerned not to live in any way of ſin, as I hope there are a conſiderable number of ſuch now preſent; and this certainly will be the caſe with all who are godly, and all who are duly concerned for their own ſalvation.

1. Examine yourſelves with reſpect to the Sabbath-day, whether you do not live in ſome way of breaking or profaning God's holy Sabbath. Do you ſtrictly in all things keep this day, as ſacred to God, in governing your thoughts, words, and actions, as the word of God requires on this holy day? Inquire whether you do not only fail in *particulars*, but whether you do not live in ſome *way* whereby this day is profaned; and particularly inquire concerning three things.

(1.) Whether it be not a frequent thing with you to encroach upon the Sabbath at its beginning *, and after the Sabbath is begun to be out at your work, or following that worldly buſineſs which is proper to be done only in our own time. If this be a thing in which you allow yourſelves, you live in a way of ſin; for it is a thing which can by no means be juſtified. You have no more warrant to be out with your team, or to be cutting wood, or doing any other worldly buſineſs, immediately after the Sabbath is begun, than you have to do it in the middle of the day. The time is as holy near the beginning of the Sabbath as it is in the middle; it is the whole that we are to reſt, and to keep holy, and devote to God; we have no licence to take any part of it to ourſelves.

When men often thus encroach upon the Sabbath, it cannot be from any neceſſity which can juſtify them; it can only be for want of due care, and due regard to holy time. They can with due care get their work finiſhed, ſo that they can leave it by a certain hour. This is evident by this, that when they are under a natural neceſſity of finiſhing

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This ſhows, that with due care men can ordinarily have done their work by a limited time. If proper care will finiſh their work by a limited time when they are under a natural neceſſity of it, the ſame care would as well finiſh it by a certain time when we are only under a moral neceſſity. If it were ſo, that men knew that as ſoon as ever the Sabbath ſhould begin, it would be perfectly dark, ſo that they would be under a natural neceſſity of leaving off their work abroad by that time, then we ſhould ſee that they would generally have their work done before the time. This ſhows that it is only for want of care, and of regard to the holy command of God, that men ſo frequently have ſome of their work abroad to do after the Sabbath is begun.

Nehemiah took great care that no burden ſhould be borne after the beginning of the Sabbath, Nehem. xiii. 19. "And it came to paſs, that when the gates of Jeruſalem "began to be dark before the Sabbath," *i. e.* began to be darkened by the ſhade of the mountains before ſunſet, "I commanded that the gates ſhould be ſhut, and "charged that they ſhould not be opened till after the "Sabbath; and ſome of my ſervants ſet I at the gates, "that there ſhould be no burden brought in on the Sab-"bath-day."

(2.) Examine whether it be not your manner to talk on the Sabbath of things unſuitable for holy time. If you do not move ſuch talk yourſelves, yet when you fall into company that ſets you the example, are you not wont to join in diverting talk, or in talk of worldly affairs, quite wide from any relation to the buſineſs of the day? There is as much reaſon that you ſhould keep the Sabbath holy with your tongues, as with your hands. If it be unſuitable for you to employ your *hands* about common and worldly things, why is it not as unſuitable for you to employ your tongues about them?

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This ſhows, that with due care men can ordinarily have done their work by a limited time. If proper care will finiſh their work by a limited time when they are under a natural neceſſity of it, the ſame care would as well finiſh it by a certain time when we are only under a moral neceſſity. If it were ſo, that men knew that as ſoon as ever the Sabbath ſhould begin, it would be perfectly dark, ſo that they would be under a natural neceſſity of leaving off their work abroad by that time, then we ſhould ſee that they would generally have their work done before the time. This ſhows that it is only for want of care, and of regard to the holy command of God, that men ſo frequently have ſome of their work abroad to do after the Sabbath is begun.

Nehemiah took great care that no burden ſhould be borne after the beginning of the Sabbath, Nehem. xiii. 19. "And it came to paſs, that when the gates of Jeruſalem "began to be dark before the Sabbath," *i. e.* began to be darkened by the ſhade of the mountains before ſunſet, "I commanded that the gates ſhould be ſhut, and "charged that they ſhould not be opened till after the "Sabbath; and ſome of my ſervants ſet I at the gates, "that there ſhould be no burden brought in on the Sab-"bath-day."

(2.) Examine whether it be not your manner to talk on the Sabbath of things unſuitable for holy time. If you do not move ſuch talk yourſelves, yet when you fall into company that ſets you the example, are you not wont to join in diverting talk, or in talk of worldly affairs, quite wide from any relation to the buſineſs of the day? There is as much reaſon that you ſhould keep the Sabbath holy with your tongues, as with your hands. If it be unſuitable for you to employ your *hands* about common and worldly things, why is it not as unſuitable for you to employ your tongues about them?

(3.) Inquire whether it be not your manner to loiter

away the time of the Sabbath, and to ſpend it in a great meaſure in idleneſs, in doing nothing. Do you not ſpend more time on Sabbath-day, than on other days, on your beds, or otherwiſe idling away the time, not improving it as a precious opportunity of ſeeking God, and your own ſalvation?

SER.

SERMON IX.

Great Care neceſſary, leſt we live in ſome way of Sin.

PSALM, cxxxix. 23. 24.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and ſee if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlaſting.

DOCTRINE. ALL men ſhould be much concerned to know, whether they do not live in ſome way of ſin.

In my laſt diſcourſe, I undertook to mention ſome particulars, as to which you ought to examine yourſelves, that you may know whether you do not live in ſome way of ſin. I then mentioned one particular, with its ſeveral branches, and now proceed,

2. To deſire you to examine yourſelves, whether you do not live in ſome way of ſin with reſpect to the inſtitutions of God's houſe. Here I ſhall mention ſeveral inſtances.

(1.) Do you not wholly neglect ſome of thoſe inſtitutions, as particularly the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper? Perhaps you pretend ſcruples of conſcience, that you are not fit to come to that ordinance, and queſtion whether you be commanded to come. But are your ſcruples the reſult of a ſerious and careful inquiry? Are they not rather a cloak for your own negligence, indolence, and thoughtleſſneſs concerning your duty? Are you ſatisfied, have you thoroughly inquired and looked into this matter? If not, do you not live in ſin, in that you do not more thoroughly inquire? Are you excuſable in neglecting a poſitive inſtitution, when you are ſcrupulous about your duty, and yet do not thoroughly inquire what it is?

But be it ſo, that you are unprepared; is not this your

own

own ſin, your own fault? and can ſin excuſe you from attending on a poſitive inſtitution of Chriſt?

When perſons are like to have children to be baptiſed, they can be convinced that it is their duty to come. If it be only conſcience that detained them, why doth it not detain them as well now as heretofore? or if they now be more thorough in their inquiries concerning their duty, ought they not to have been thorough in their inquiries before as well as now?

(2.) Do you not live in ſin, in living in the neglect of ſinging God's praiſes? If ſinging praiſe to God be an ordinance of God's public worſhip, as doubtleſs it is, then it ought to be attended and performed by the whole worſhipping aſſembly. If it be a command that we ſhould worſhip God in this way, then all ought to obey this command, not only by joining with others in ſinging, but in ſinging themſelves. For if we ſuppoſe it anſwers the command of God for us only to join in our hearts with others, it will run us into this abſurdity, that *all* may do ſo; and then there would be none to ſing, none for others to join with.

If it be an appointment of God, that Chriſtian congregations ſhould ſing praiſes to him, then doubtleſs it is the duty of *all*; if there be no exception in the rule, then all ought to comply with it, unleſs they be incapable of it, or unleſs it would be an hinderance to the other work of God's houſe, as the caſe may be with miniſters, who ſometimes may be in great need of that reſpite and intermiſſion after public prayers, to recover their breath and ſtrength, ſo that they may be fit to ſpeak the word. But if perſons be now not capable, becauſe they know not how to ſing, that doth not excuſe them, unleſs they have been incapable of learning. As it is the command of God, that all ſhould ſing, ſo all ſhould make conſcience of learning to ſing, as it is a thing which cannot be decently performed at all without learning. Thoſe, therefore, who neglect to learn to ſing, live in ſin, as they neglect what is neceſſary in order to their attending one of the ordinances of God's worſhip.

Not only ſhould perſons make conſcience of learning to ſing themſelves, but parents ſhould conſcientiouſly ſee to it, that their children are taught this among other things, as their education and inſtruction belongs to them.

(3.) Are you not guilty of allowing yourſelves in ſin, in neglecting to do your part towards the removal of ſcandals from among us? All perſons that are in the church, and the

the children of the church, are under the watch of the church; and it is one of thoſe duties to which we are bound by the covenant which we either actually or virtually make, in uniting ourſelves to a particular church, that we will watch over our brethren, and do our part to uphold the ordinances of God in their purity. This is the end of the inſtitution of particular churches, viz. the maintaining of the ordinances of divine worſhip there, in the manner which God hath appointed.

Examine whether you have not allowed yourſelves in ſin with reſpect to this matter, through fear of offending your neighbours. Have you not allowedly neglected the proper ſteps for removing ſcandals, when you have ſeen them; the ſteps of reproving them privately, where the caſe would allow of it, and of telling them to the church, where the caſe required it? Inſtead of watching over your brother, have you not rather hid yourſelves, that you might not be witneſſes againſt him? and when you have ſeen ſcandal in him, have you not avoided the taking of proper ſteps according to the caſe?

(4.) Art not thou one whoſe manner it is, to come late to the public worſhip of God, and eſpecially in *winter*, when the weather is cold? and doſt thou not live in ſin in ſo doing? Conſider whether it be a way which can be juſtified; whether it be a practice which doth honour to God and religion; whether it have not the appearance of ſetting light by the public worſhip and ordinances of God's houſe. Doth it not ſhow that thou doſt not prize ſuch opportunities, and that thou art willing to have as little of them as thou canſt? Is it not a diſorderly practice? and if all ſhould do as thou doſt, what confuſion would it occaſion?

(5.) Art thou not one whoſe manner it commonly is to ſleep in the time of public ſervice? and is not this to live in a way of ſin? Conſider the matter rationally; is it a thing to be juſtified, for thee to lay thyſelf down to ſleep, while thou art preſent in the time of divine ſervice, and pretendeſt to be one of the worſhipping aſſembly, and to be hearing a meſſage from God? Would it not be looked upon as an high affront, an odious behaviour, if thou ſhouldſt do ſo in the preſence of a king, while a meſſage was delivering to thee, in his name, by one of his ſervants? Canſt thou put a greater contempt on the meſſage which the King of kings ſendeth to thee, concerning things of the greateſt importance, than from time to time to lay thyſelf down, and

compoſe

compoſe thyſelf to ſleep, while the meſſenger is delivering his meſſage to thee?

(6.) Art thou not one who is not careful to keep his mind intent upon what is ſaid and done in public worſhip? Doſt thou not, in the midſt of the moſt ſolemn acts of worſhip, ſuffer thy thoughts to rove after worldly objects, worldly cares and concerns, or perhaps the objects of thy wicked luſts and deſires? and doſt thou not herein live in a way of ſin?

3. The next thing I ſhall propoſe to you to examine yourſelves about, is, whether you do not live in ſome ſecret ſin; whether you do not live in the neglect of ſome ſecret duty, or ſecretly live in ſome practice which is offenſive to the pure and all-ſeeing eye of God. Here you ſhould examine yourſelves concerning all ſecret duties, as reading, meditation, ſecret prayer; whether you attend thoſe at all, or if you do, whether you do not attend them in an unſteady and careleſs manner. You ſhould alſo examine yourſelves concerning all ſecret ſins. Strictly inquire what your behaviour is, when you are hid from the eye of the world, when you are under no other reſtraints than thoſe of conſcience, when you are not afraid of the eye of man, and have nothing to fear but the all-ſeeing eye of God.

Here, among many other things which might be mentioned, I ſhall particularly mention two.

(1.) Inquire whether you do not live in the neglect of the duty of reading the holy ſcriptures. The holy ſcriptures were ſurely written to be read; and unleſs we be *Papiſh* in our principles, we ſhall maintain, that they were not only given to be read by miniſters, but by the people too. It doth not anſwer the deſign for which they were given, that we have once read them, and that we once in a great while read ſome thing in them. They were given to be always with us, to be continually converſed with, as a rule of life. As the artificer muſt always have his rule with him in his work; and the blind man that walks muſt always have his guide by him; and he that walks in darkneſs muſt have his light with him; ſo the ſcriptures were given to be *a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path.*

That we may continually uſe the ſcriptures as our rule of life, we ſhould make them our daily companion, and keep them with us continually: Joſh. i. 8. "This book of the "law ſhall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou ſhalt "meditate therein day and night." See alſo Deut. vi. 6. 7. 8. 9. So Chriſt commands us to ſearch the ſcriptures, John,

John, v. 39. Theſe are the mines wherein we are to dig for wiſdom as for hidden treaſures. Inquire, therefore, whether you do not live in the neglect of this duty, or neglect it ſo far, that you may be ſaid to live in a way of ſin.

(2.) Inquire whether you do not live in ſome way of ſecretly gratifying ſome ſenſual luſt. There are many ways and degrees, wherein a carnal luſt may be indulged; but every way is provoking to an holy God. Conſider whether, although you reſtrain yourſelves from more groſs indulgences, you do not, in ſome way or other, and in ſome degree or other, ſecretly from time to time gratify your luſts, and allow yourſelves to taſte the ſweets of unlawful delight.

Perſons may greatly provoke God, by only allowedly gratifying their luſts in their thoughts and imaginations. They may alſo greatly provoke God by exceſs and intemperance in gratifying their animal appetites in thoſe things which are in themſelves lawful. Inquire, therefore, whether you do not live in ſome ſinful way or other, in ſecretly gratifying a ſinful appetite.

4. I would propoſe to you, to examine yourſelves, whether you do not live in ſome way of ſin, in the ſpirit and temper of mind which you allow towards your neighbour.

(1.) Do you not allow and indulge a paſſionate furious diſpoſition? If your natural temper be haſty and paſſionate, do you truly ſtrive againſt ſuch a temper, and labour to govern your ſpirit? Do you lament it, and watch over yourſelves to prevent it? or do you allow yourſelves in a fiery temper? Such a diſpoſition doth not become a *Chriſtian*, or a *man*. It doth not become a man, becauſe it unmans him; it turns a man from a rational creature to be like a wild beaſt. When men are under the prevalency of a furious paſſion, they have not much of the exerciſe of reaſon. We are warned to avoid ſuch men, as being dangerous creatures, Prov. xxii. 24. 25. "Make no friendſhip with an "angry man; and with a furious man thou ſhalt not go, "leſt thou learn his ways, and get a ſnare to thy ſoul."

(2.) Do not you live in hatred towards ſome or other of your neighbours? Do you not hate him for real or ſuppoſed injuries that you have received from him? Do you not hate him, becauſe he is not friendly towards you, and becauſe you judge that he hath an ill ſpirit againſt you, and hates you, and becauſe he oppoſes you, and doth not ſhow you that reſpect which you think belongs to you, or doth not ſhow himſelf forward to promote your intereſt or ho-

nour? Do you not hate him, becauſe you think he deſpiſes you, has a mean thought of you, and takes occaſion in his talk of you to ſhow it? Do you not hate him, becauſe he is of the oppoſite party to that which is in your intereſt, and becauſe he has conſiderable influence in that party?

Doubtleſs you will be loath to call it by ſo harſh a name as *hatred*; but inquire ſeriouſly and impartially, whether it be any thing better. Do you not feel ill towards him? Do you not feel a prevailing diſpoſition within you to be pleaſed when you hear him talked againſt and run down, and to be glad when you hear of any diſhonour put upon him, or of any diſappointments which happen to him? Would you not be glad of an opportunity to be even with him for the injuries which he hath done you? And wherein doth hatred work but in ſuch ways as theſe?

(3.) Inquire whether you do not live in envy towards ſome one at leaſt of your neighbours. Is not his proſperity, his riches, or his advancement in honour, uncomfortable to you? Have you not, therefore, an ill will, or at leaſt leſs good will to him, becauſe you look upon him as ſtanding in your way, you look upon yourſelf as depreſſed by his advancement? And would it not be pleaſing to you now, if he ſhould be deprived of his riches, or of his honours, not from pure reſpect to the public good, but becauſe you reckon he ſtands in your way? Is it not merely from a ſelfiſh ſpirit that you are ſo uneaſy at his proſperity?

5. I ſhall propoſe to your conſideration, whether you do not live in ſome way of ſin, and wrong in your dealings with your neighbours.

(1.) Inquire whether you do not from time to time injure and defraud thoſe with whom you deal. Are your ways with your neighbour altogether juſt, ſuch as will bear a trial by the ſtrict rules of the word of God, or ſuch as you can juſtify before God? Are you a faithful perſon? may your neighbours depend on your word? Are you ſtrictly and firmly true to your truſt, or any thing with which you are betruſted, and which you undertake? Or do you not by your conduct plainly ſhow, that you are not conſcientious in ſuch things?

Do you not live in a careleſs ſinful neglect of paying your debts? Do you not, to the detriment of your neighbour, ſinfully with-hold that which is not your own, but his? Are you not wont to oppreſs your neighbour? When you ſee another in neceſſity, do you not thence take advantage

tage to ſcrew upon him? When you ſee a perſon ignorant, and perceive that you have an opportunity to make your gains of it, are you not wont to take ſuch an opportunity? Will you not deceive in buying and ſelling, and labour to blind the eyes of him of whom you buy, or to whom you ſell, with deceitful words, hiding the faults of what you ſell, and denying the good qualities of what you buy, and not ſtrictly keeping to the truth, when you ſee that falſehood will be an advantage to you in your bargain?

(2.) Do you not live in ſome wrong which you have formerly done your neighbour, without repairing it? Are you not conſcious that you have formerly, at ſome time or other, wronged your neighbour, and yet you live in it, have never repaired the injury which you have done him? If ſo, you live in a way of ſin.

6. I deſire you would examine yourſelves, whether you do not live in the neglect of the duties of charity towards your neighbour. You may live in ſin towards your neighbour, though you cannot charge yourſelves with living in any injuſtice in your dealings. Here alſo I would mention two things.

(1.) Whether you are guilty of ſinfully with-holding from your neighbour who is in want. Giving to the poor, and giving liberally and bountifully, is a duty abſolutely required of us. It is not a thing left to perſons choice to do as they pleaſe; nor is it merely a thing commendable in perſons to be liberal to others in want; but it is a duty as ſtrictly and abſolutely required and commanded as any other duty whatſoever, a duty from which God will not acquit us; as you may ſee in Deut. xv. 7. 8. &c.: and the neglect of this duty is very provoking to God, Prov. xxi. 13. "Whoſo ſtoppeth "his ears at the cry of the poor, he alſo himſelf ſhall cry, "and not be heard."

Inquire, therefore, whether you have not lived in a way of ſin in this regard. Do you not ſee your neighbour ſuffer, and be pinched with want, and you, although ſenſible of it, harden your hearts againſt him, and are careleſs about it? Do you not, in ſuch a caſe, neglect to inquire into his neceſſities, and to do ſomething for his relief? Is it not your manner to hide your eyes in ſuch caſes, and to be ſo far from deviſing liberal things, and endeavouring to find out the proper objects and occaſions of charity, that you rather contrive to avoid the knowledge of them? Are

you not apt to make objections to ſuch duties, and to excuſe yourſelves? and are you not ſorry for ſuch occaſions, on which you are forced to give ſomething, or expoſe your reputation? Are not ſuch things grievous to you? If theſe things be ſo, ſurely you live in ſin, and in a great ſin, and have need to inquire, whether your ſpot be not ſuch as is not the ſpot of God's children.

(2.) Do you not live in the neglect of reproving your neighbour, when you ſee him going on in a way of ſin? This is required of us by the command of God, as a duty of love and charity which we owe our neighbour: Lev. xix. 17. "Thou ſhalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou "ſhalt in any wiſe rebuke thy neighbour, and not ſuffer "ſin upon him." When we ſee our neighbour going on in ſin, we ought to go, and in a Chriſtian way deal with him about it. Nor will it excuſe us, that we fear it will have no good effect; we cannot certainly tell what effect it will have. This is paſt doubt, that if Chriſtians generally performed this duty as they ought to do, it would prevent abundance of ſin and wickedneſs, and would deliver many a ſoul from the ways of death.

If a man going on in the ways of ſin, ſaw that it was generally diſliked and diſcountenanced, and teſtified againſt by others, it would have a ſtrong tendency to reform him. His regard for his own reputation would ſtrongly perſuade him to reform; for hereby he would ſee that the way in which he lives makes him odious in the eyes of others. When perſons go on in ſin, and no one ſaith any thing to them in teſtimony againſt it, they know not but that their ways are approved, and are not ſenſible that it is much to their diſhonour to do as they do. The approbation of others tends to blind men's eyes, and harden their hearts in ſin; whereas, if they ſaw that others utterly diſapprove of their ways, it would tend to open their eyes and convince them.

If others neglect their duty in this reſpect, and our reproof alone will not be ſo likely to be effectual; yet that doth not excuſe us: for if one ſingly may be excuſed, then every one may be excuſed, and ſo we ſhall make it no duty at all.

Perſons often need the reproofs and admonitions of others, to make them ſenſible that the ways in which they live are ſinful; for, as hath been already obſerved, men are often blinded as to their own ſins.

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7. Examine yourſelves, whether you do not live in ſome way of ſin in your converſation with your neighbours. Men commit abundance of ſin, not only in the buſineſs and dealings which they have with their neighbours, but in their talk and converſe with them.

(1.) Inquire whether you do not keep company with perſons of a lewd and immoral behaviour, with perſons who do not make conſcience of their ways, are not of ſober lives, but, on the contrary, are profane and extravagant, and unclean in their communication. This is what the word of God forbids, and teſtifies againſt: Prov. xiv. 7. "Go from the preſence of a fooliſh man, when thou perceiveſt not in him the lips of knowledge;" Prov. xiii. 20. "A companion of fools ſhall be deſtroyed." The Pſalmiſt profeſſes himſelf clear of this ſin, Pſal. xxvi. 4. 5. "I have not ſat with vain perſons; neither will I go with diſſemblers: I have hated the congregation of evil doers, and will not ſit with the wicked."

Do you not live in this ſin? Do you not keep company with ſuch perſons? and have you not found them a ſnare to your ſouls? If you have any ſerious thoughts about the great concerns of your ſouls, have you not found this a great hindrance to you? Have you not found that it hath been a great temptation to you? Have you not been from time to time led into ſin thereby? Perhaps it may ſeem difficult wholly to forſake your old wicked companions. You are afraid they will deride you, and make a game of you; therefore you have not courage enough to do it. But whether it be difficult or not, yet know this, that if you continue in ſuch connections, you live in a way of ſin, and, as the ſcripture ſaith, *you ſhall be deſtroyed.* You muſt either cut off your right hands, and pluck out your right eyes, or elſe even go with them into the fire that never ſhall be quenched.

(2.) Conſider whether, in your converſation with others, you do not accuſtom yourſelves to evil ſpeaking. How common is it for perſons, when they meet together, to ſit and ſpend their time in talking againſt others, judging this or that of them, ſpreading ill and uncertain reports which they have heard of them, running down one and another, and ridiculing their infirmities! How much is ſuch ſort of talk as this the entertainment of companies when they meet together! and what talk is there which ſeems to be more entertaining, to which perſons will more liſten, and in which they

they will ſeem to be more engaged, than ſuch talk! You cannot but know how common this is.

Therefore examine whether you be not guilty of this. And can you juſtify it? Do you not know it to be a way of ſin, a way which is condemned by many rules in the word of God? Are you not guilty of eagerly taking up any ill report which you hear of your neighbour, ſeeming to be glad that you have ſome news to talk of, with which you think others will be entertained? Do you not often ſpread ill reports which you hear of others, before you know what ground there is for them? Do you not take a pleaſure in being the reporter of ſuch news? Are you not wont to paſs a judgement concerning others, or their behaviour, without talking to them, and hearing what they have to ſay for themſelves? Doth not that folly and ſhame belong to you which is ſpoken of in Prov. xviii. 13. "He "that anſwereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and "ſhame unto him."

This is utterly an iniquity, a very unchriſtian practice, which commonly prevails, that men, when they hear or know of any ill of others, will not do a Chriſtian part, in going to talk with them about it, to reprove them for it, but will get behind their backs before they open their mouths, and there are very forward to ſpeak, and to judge, to the hurt of their neighbour's good name. Conſider whether you be not guilty of this. Conſider alſo how apt you are to be diſpleaſed when you hear that others have been talking againſt you! how forward are you to apply the rules, and to think and tell how they ought firſt to have come and talked with you about it, and not to have gone and ſpread an ill report of you, before they knew what you had to ſay in your vindication!

How ready are perſons to reſent it, when others meddle with their private affairs, and buſy themſelves, and judge, and find fault, and declaim againſt them! How ready are they to ſay, it is no buſineſs of theirs! Yet are you not guilty of the ſame?

(3.) Is it not your manner to ſeem to countenance and fall in with the talk of the company in which you are, in that which is evil? When the company is vain in its talk, and falls into lewd diſcourſe, or vain jeſtery, is it not your manner, in ſuch a caſe, to comply and fall in with the company, to ſeem pleaſed with its talk, if not to join with it, and help to carry on ſuch diſcourſe, out of compliance with your

your company, though indeed you diſapprove of it in your hearts? So inquire whether it be not your manner to fall in with your companions, when they are talking againſt others. Do you not help forward the diſcourſe, or at leaſt ſeem to fall in with their cenſures, and the aſperſions they caſt on others, and the reflections they make upon their neighbours characters?

There are ſome perſons, who, in caſe of difference between perſons or parties, are double-tongued, will ſeem to fall in with both parties. When they are with thoſe on one ſide, they will ſeem to be on their ſide, and to fall in with them, in their talk againſt their antagoniſts. At another time, when they are with thoſe of the other ſide, they will ſeem to comply with them, and will condemn the other party; which is a very vile and deceitful practice. Seeming to be friendly to both before their faces, they are enemies to both behind their backs; and that upon ſo mean a motive as the pleaſing of the party with which they are in company. They injure both parties, and do what in them lies to eſtabliſh the difference between them. Inquire whether or no this be your manner.

(4.) Is it not your manner, not to confine yourſelves to ſtrict truth in your converſation with your neighbours? Lying is accounted ignominious and reproachful among men; and they take it in high diſdain to be called liars; yet how many are there that do not ſo govern their tongues, as ſtrictly to confine them to the truth! There are various degrees of tranſgreſſing in this kind. Some, who may be cautious of tranſgreſſing in one degree, may allow themſelves in another. Some, who commonly avoid ſpeaking directly and wholly contrary to truth, in a plain matter of fact; yet perhaps are not ſtrictly true in ſpeaking of their own thoughts, deſires, affections, and deſigns, and are not exact to the truth, in the relations which they give of things in converſation; ſcruple not to vary in circumſtances, to add ſome things, to make their ſtory the more entertaining; will magnify and enlarge things, to make their relation the more wonderful; and in things wherein their intereſt or credit is concerned, will make falſe repreſentations of things; will be guilty of an unwarrantable equivocation, and a guileful way of ſpeaking, wherein they are chargeable with a great abuſe of language. In order to ſave their veracity, words and ſentences muſt be wreſted to a meaning quite beſide their natural and eſtabliſhed ſignification.

Whatever

Whatever interpretation ſuch men put on their own words, they do not ſave themſelves from the guilt of lying in the ſight of God. Inquire whether you be not guilty of living in ſin in this particular.

I intended to propoſe one more particular for your conſideration; but this muſt be deferred till another opportunity.

SER.

SERMON X.

Great Care neceſſary, leſt we live in ſome way of Sin.

PSALM, CXXXIX. 23. 24.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and ſee if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlaſting.

DOCTRINE. ALL men ſhould be much concerned to know whether they do not live in ſome way of ſin.

Having mentioned ſeveral things in illuſtration of this doctrine, I at length came to the improvement, and was laſt propoſing to you ſeveral particulars as the ſubjects of ſelf-examination, by which you might be enabled to determine, whether you do not live in ſome way of ſin. In addition to what I have already ſaid, I proceed to deſire you,

8. To examine yourſelves, whether you do not live in ſome way of ſin in the families to which you belong. There are many perſons who appear well among their neighbours, and ſeem to be of an honeſt civil behaviour in their dealings and converſation abroad; yet if you follow them to their own houſes, and to the families to which they belong, there you will find them very perverſe in their ways; there they live in ways which are very diſpleaſing to the pure all-ſearching eyes of God. You have already been directed to examine your converſation abroad; you have been directed to ſearch the houſe of God, and to ſee if you have brought no defilement into it; you have been directed to ſearch your cloſets, to ſee if there be no pollution or provocation there; be adviſed now to ſearch your houſes, examine your behaviour in the families to which you belong, and ſee what your ways and manners are there.

The houſes to which we belong are the places where the generality of us ſpend the greater part of our time. If we reſpect the world as a man's ſphere of action, a man's own houſe is the greater part of the world to him; i. e. the greater part of his actions and behaviour in the world is limited within this ſphere. We ſhould therefore be very critical in examining our behaviour, not only abroad, but at home. A great proportion of the wickedneſs that men are guilty of, and that will be brought out at the day of judgement, will be the ſin which they ſhall have committed in the families to which they belong.

Therefore inquire how you behave yourſelves in the family-relations in which you ſtand. As thoſe relative duties which we owe towards the members of the ſame family belong to the ſecond table of the law, ſo love is the general duty which compriſes them all. Therefore,

(1.) Examine yourſelves, whether you do not live in ſome way which is contrary to that love which is due to thoſe who belong to the ſame family. Love, implying an hearty good will, and a behaviour agreeable to it, is a duty which we owe to all mankind. We owe it to our neighbours, to whom we are no otherwiſe related than as they are our neighbours; yea, we owe it to thoſe who ſtand in no relation to us, except that they are of mankind, are reaſonable creatures, the ſons and daughters of Adam. It is a duty that we owe to our enemies; how much more then do we owe it to thoſe who ſtand in ſo near a relation to us as an huſband or wife, parents or children, brethren or ſiſters!

There are the ſame obligations on us to love ſuch relatives as to love the reſt of mankind. We are to love them as men; we are to love them as our neighbours; we are to love them as belonging to the ſame Chriſtian church; and not only ſo, but here is an additional obligation, ariſing from that near relation in which they ſtand to us. This is over and above the other. The nearer the relation, the greater is the obligation to love. To live in hatred, or in a way that is contrary to love, towards any man, is very diſpleaſing to God; but how much more towards one of the ſame family! Love is the uniting band of all ſocieties, Col. iii. 14. "And above all theſe things, put on charity, which is the "bond of perfectneſs."

The union in love in our own family ſhould be ſo much the ſtronger, as that ſociety is more peculiarly our own, and is more appropriated to ourſelves, or is a ſociety in which

we

we are more eſpecially intereſted. Chriſt ſaith, Matth. vii. 22. "I ſay unto you, whoſoever is angry with his brother without a cauſe, ſhall be in danger of the judgement; and whoſoever ſhall ſay to his brother, Raca, ſhall be in danger of the council; and whoſoever ſhall ſay, Thou fool, ſhall be in danger of hell-fire." If this be true concerning thoſe who are our brethren only as men, or profeſſing Chriſtians, how much more concerning thoſe who are of the ſame family? If contention be ſo evil a thing in a town among neighbours, how much more hateful is it between members of the ſame family? If hatred, envy, or revenge, be ſo diſpleaſing to God, towards thoſe who are only our fellow-creatures, how much more provoking muſt it be between thoſe that are our natural brothers and ſiſters, and are one bone and fleſh? If only being angry with a neighbour without a cauſe be ſo evil, how much ſin muſt needs be committed in thoſe broils and quarrels between the neareſt relations on earth?

Let every one inquire how it is with himſelf. Do you not in this reſpect allow yourſelves in ſome way of ſin? Are you not often jarring and contending with thoſe who dwell under the ſame roof? Is not your ſpirit often ruffled with anger towards ſome of the ſame family? Do you not often go ſo far as to wiſh evil to them in your hearts, wiſh that ſome calamity would befall them? Are you not guilty of reproachful language towards them, if not of revengeful acts? Do you not neglect and refuſe thoſe offices of kindneſs and mutual helpfulneſs which become thoſe who are of one family? Yea, are there not ſome who really go ſo far, as in ſome degree to entertain a ſettled hatred or malice againſt ſome of their neareſt relations?——But here I would particularly apply myſelf,

[1.] To huſbands and wives. Inquire whether you do not live in ſome way of ſin in this relation. Do you make conſcience of performing all thoſe duties which God in his word requires of perſons in this relation? or do you allow yourſelves in ſome ways which are directly oppoſite thereto? Do you not live in ways that are contrary to the obligations into which you entered in your marriage-covenant? The promiſes which you then made are not only binding as promiſes which are ordinarily made between man and man, but they have the nature of vows or promiſſory oaths; they are made in the preſence of God, becauſe they reſpect him as a witneſs to them; and therefore the marriage-covenant is called *the covenant of God*, Prov. ii. 17.; "which forſaketh

" keth the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant " of her God." When you have vowed that you will behave towards thoſe to whom you are thus united, as the word of God directs in ſuch a relation, are you careleſs about it, no more thinking what you have promiſed and vowed, regardleſs how you perform thoſe vows?

Particularly, are you not commonly guilty of bitterneſs of ſpirit towards one another, and of unkindneſs in your language and behaviour? If wrath, and contention, and unkind and reproachful language, be provoking to God, when only between neighbours; what is it then between thoſe whom God hath joined together to be one fleſh, and between whom he hath commanded ſo great and dear a friendſhip to be maintained? Eph. v. 28. 29. " So ought " men to love their wives, as their own bodies. He that " loveth his wife, loveth himſelf. For no man ever yet " hated his own fleſh; but nouriſheth and cheriſheth it, " even as the Lord the church:" Eph. v. 25. " Huſbands, " love your wives, even as Chriſt alſo loved the church, and " gave himſelf for it."

It is no excuſe at all for either party to indulge bitterneſs and contention in this relation, that the other party is to blame; for when was there ever one of fallen mankind to be found who had no faults? When God commanded ſuch an entire friendſhip between man and wife, he knew that the greater part of mankind would have faults; yet he made no exception. And if you think your yoke-fellows have faults, you ſhould conſider whether you yourſelves have not ſome too. There never will be any ſuch thing as perſons living in peace one with another, in this relation, if this be eſteemed a ſufficient and juſtifiable cauſe of the contrary. It becomes good friends to cover one another's faults: *Love covers a multitude of faults:* Prov. x. 1. " Ha- " tred ſtirreth up ſtrife; but love covereth all ſins." But are not you rather quick to ſpy faults, and ready to make the moſt of them. Are not very little things often the occaſion of contention between you? Will not a little thing often ruffle your ſpirits towards your companions? and when any miſunderſtanding is begun, are you not guilty of exaſperating one another's ſpirits by unkind language, until you blow up a ſpark into a flame?

Do you endeavour to accommodate yourſelves to each other's tempers? Do you ſtudy to ſuit each other? or do you ſet up your own wills, to have your own ways, in oppoſition to each other, in the management of your family-

concerns?

concerns? Do you make it your ſtudy to render each other's lives comfortable? or is there not, on the contrary, very often ſubſiſting between you a ſpirit of ill will, a diſpoſition to vex and croſs one another?

Huſbands do ſometimes greatly ſin againſt God, in being of an unkind imperious behaviour towards their wives, treating them as if they were ſervants; and (to mention one inſtance of ſuch treatment in particular) laying them under unjuſt and unreaſonable reſtraints in the uſe and diſpoſal of their common property; forbidding them ſo much as to diſpoſe of any thing in charity, as of their own judgement and prudence. This is directly contrary to the word of God, where it is ſaid of the virtuous wife, Prov. xxxi. 20. that "ſhe ſtretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, ſhe "reacheth forth her hands to the needy." If God hath made this her duty, then he hath given her this right and power, becauſe the duty ſuppoſes the right. It cannot be the duty of her who hath no right to diſpoſe of any thing, to ſtretch forth her hand to the poor, and to reach forth her hands to the needy.

On the other hand, are not the commands of God, the rules of his word, and the ſolemn vows of the marriage-covenant, with reſpect to the ſubordination which there ought to be in this relation, made light of by many? Eph. v. 22. "Wives, ſubmit yourſelves to your own huſbands, as "unto the Lord:" ſo Col. iii. 18. What is commanded by God, and what hath been ſolemnly vowed and ſworn in his preſence, certainly ought not to be made a jeſt of; and the perſon who lightly violates theſe obligations will doubtleſs be treated as one who ſlights the authority of God, and takes his name in vain.

[2.] I ſhall apply myſelf to parents and heads of families. Inquire whether you do not live in ſome way of ſin with reſpect to your children, or others committed to your care; and particularly inquire,

1. Whether you do not live in ſin, by living in the neglect of inſtructing them. Do you not wholly neglect the duty of inſtructing your children and ſervants? or if you do not wholly neglect it, yet do you not afford them ſo little inſtruction, and are you not ſo unſteady, and do you not take ſo little pains in it, that you live in a ſinful neglect? Do you take pains in any meaſure proportionate to the importance of the matter? You cannot but own that it is a matter of vaſt importance, that your children be fitted for death, and ſaved from hell; and that all poſſible care

care be taken that it be done ſpeedily; for you know not how ſoon your children may die. Are you as careful about the welfare of their ſouls as you are of their bodies? Do you labour as much that they may have eternal life, as you do to provide eſtates for them to live on in this world?

Let every parent inquire, whether he do not live in a way of ſin in this reſpect; and let maſters inquire, whether they do not live in a way of ſin, in neglecting the poor ſouls of their ſervants; whether their only care be not to make their ſervants ſubſervient to their worldly intereſt, without any concern what becomes of them to all eternity.

2. Do you not live in a ſinful neglect of the government of your families? Do you not live in the ſin of Eli? who indeed counſelled and reproved his children, but did not exerciſe government over them. He reproved them very ſolemnly, as 1 Sam. ii. 23. 24. 25.; but he did not reſtrain them; by which he greatly provoked God, and brought an everlaſting curſe upon his houſe: 1 Sam. iii. 12. "In that day I will perform againſt Eli all things which I "have ſpoken concerning his houſe. When I begin, I will "alſo make an end. I will judge his houſe for ever; be-"cauſe his ſons made themſelves vile, and he reſtrained "them not."

If you ſay you cannot reſtrain your children, this is no excuſe; for it is a ſign that you have brought up your children without government, that your children regard not your authority. When parents loſe their government over their children, their reproofs and counſel ſignify but little. How many parents are there who are exceedingly faulty on this account! How few are there who are thorough in maintaining order and government in their families! How is family-government in a great meaſure vaniſhed! and how many are as likely to bring a curſe upon their families, as Eli! This is one principal ground of the corruptions which prevail in the land. This is the foundation of ſo much debauchery, and of ſuch corrupt practices among young people: family-government is in a great meaſure extinct. By neglect in this particular, parents bring the guilt of their children's ſins upon their own ſouls, and the blood of their children will be required at their hands.

Parents ſometimes weaken one another's hands in this work; one parent diſapproving what the other doth; one ſmiling upon a child, while the other frowns; one protecting, while the other corrects. When things in a family are thus, children are like to be undone. Therefore let every one

one examine whether he do not live in ſome way of ſin with reſpect to this matter.

[3.] I ſhall now apply myſelf to children. Let them examine themſelves, whether they do not live in ſome way of ſin towards their parents. Are you not guilty of ſome undutifulneſs towards them, in which you allow yourſelves? Are you not guilty of deſpiſing your parents for infirmities which you ſee in them? Undutiful children are ready to contemn their parents for their infirmities. Are not you ſons of Ham, who ſaw and made a deriſion of his father's nakedneſs, whereby he entailed a curſe on himſelf and his poſterity to this day; and not the ſons of Shem and Japheth, who covered the nakedneſs of their father? Are you not guilty of diſhonouring and deſpiſing your parents for natural infirmities, or thoſe of old age? Prov. xxiii. 22. "Deſpiſe not thy mother when ſhe is old." Doth not that curſe belong to you, in Deut. xxvii. 16. "Curſed be he that "ſetteth light by his father or his mother?"

Are you not wont to deſpiſe the counſels and reproofs of your parents? When they warn you againſt any ſin, and reprove you for any miſconduct, are you not wont to ſet light by it, and to be impatient under it? Do you honour your parents for it? on the contrary, do you not receive it with reſentment, proudly rejecting it? Doth it not ſtir up corruption, and a ſtubborn and perverſe ſpirit in you, and rather make you to have an ill-will to your parents, than to love and honour them? Are you not to be reckoned among the fools mentioned, Prov. xv. 5. "A fool "deſpiſeth his father's inſtruction?" and doth not that curſe belong to you, Prov. xxx. 17. "The eye that mock-"eth at his father, and deſpiſeth to obey his mother, the "ravens of the valley ſhall pick it out, and the young eagles "ſhall eat it?"

Do you not allow a fretful diſpoſition towards your parents, when they croſs you in any thing? Are you not apt to find fault with your parents, and to be out of temper with them?

Conſider, that if you live in ſuch ways as theſe, you not only live in ſin, but in that ſin, than which there is ſcarcely any one oftener threatened with a curſe in the word of God.

III. We come now to the *third* thing propoſed in this uſe of the doctrine, viz. to mention ſome things, to convince thoſe who, upon examination, find that they do live in ſome way

way of ſin, of the importance of their knowing and amending their manner of life. You have had directions laid before you, how to find out whether you do live in any way of ſin or not; and you have heard many particulars mentioned as proper ſubjects for your examination of yourſelves. How then do you find things? Do you find yourſelves clear of living in any way of ſin? I mean not whether you find yourſelves clear of ſin; that is not expected of any of you; for there is not a man upon earth that doeth good, and ſinneth not, 1 Kings, viii. 46. But is there not ſome way of ſin in which you *live*, which is your *ſtated way* or *practice?* There are doubtleſs ſome who are clear in this matter, ſome "who are undefiled in the way, and do no "iniquity," Pſal. cxix. 1. 2. 3.

Let your own conſciences anſwer how you find with reſpect to yourſelves, by thoſe things which have been propoſed to you. Do you not find that you are guilty? that you live in a way of ſin, and have allowed yourſelves in it? —— If this be the caſe, then conſider the following things.

1. If you have been long ſeeking ſalvation, and have not yet ſucceeded, it may be this hath been the cauſe. You have perhaps wondered what hath been the matter, that you have been ſo long a time under concern about your ſalvation, that you have taken ſo much pains, and all ſeems to be to no purpoſe. You have many a time cried earneſtly to God, yet he doth not regard you. Others obtain comfort, but you are left in darkneſs. But it is no wonder at all, if you have lived in ſome way of ſin all this while. If you have lived in any ſinful way, this is a ſufficient reaſon why all your prayers and all your pains have been blaſted.

If all this while you have lived in ſome ſinful way, ſo far you have failed of ſeeking ſalvation in the right way. The right way of ſeeking ſalvation is, to ſeek it in the diligent performance of all duties, and in the denial of all ungodlineſs. If there be any one member that is corrupt, and you cut it not off, there is danger that it will carry you to hell, Mat. v. 29. 30.

2. If grace have not been in flouriſhing, but, on the contrary, in languiſhing circumſtances in your ſouls, perhaps this is the cauſe. The way to grow in grace is to walk in the way of obedience to all the commands of God, to be very thorough in the practice of religion. Grace will flouriſh in the hearts of thoſe who live in this manner; but if you live in ſome way of ſin, that will be like ſome ſecret

diſeaſe

diſeaſe at your vitals, which will keep you poor, weak, and languiſhing.

One way of ſin lived in will wonderfully keep you down in your ſpiritual proſperity, and in the growth and ſtrength of grace in your hearts. It will grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and will in a great meaſure baniſh him from you: this will prevent the good influence of the word and ordinances of God to the cauſing of grace to flouriſh in you. It will be a great obſtacle to their good effect. It will be like an ulcer within a man, which, while it remains, will keep him weak and lean, though you feed him with ever ſo wholeſome food, or feaſt him ever ſo daintily.

3. If you have been left to fall into great ſin, perhaps this was the occaſion of it. If you have been left greatly to wound your own ſouls, perhaps this was what made way for it, that you allowed yourſelves in ſome way of ſin. A man who doth not avoid every ſin, and is not univerſally obedient, cannot be well guarded againſt great ſins. The ſin in which he lives will be always an inlet, an open door, by which Satan from time to time will find entrance. It is like a breach in your fortreſs, through which the enemy may get in, and find his way to you, greatly to hurt and wound you.

If there be any way of ſin which is retained as an outlet to corruption, it will be like a breach in a dam, which, if it be let alone, and be not ſtopped, will grow bigger and wider, and will endanger the whole. If any way of ſin be lived in, it will be like *Gideon's Ephod*, which was a ſnare to him and his houſe.

4. If you live very much in ſpiritual darkneſs, and without the comfortable preſence of God, it may be this is the cauſe. If you complain that you have but little ſweet communion with God, that you ſeem to be left and deſerted of God, that God ſeems to hide his face from you, and but ſeldom gives you the ſweet views of his glory and grace, that you ſeem to be left very much to grope in darkneſs, and to wander in a wilderneſs; perhaps you have wondered what is the matter; you have cried to God often, that you might have the light of his countenance, but he heareth you not; and you have ſorrowful days and nights upon this account. But if you have found, by what hath been ſaid, that you live in ſome way of ſin, it is very probable that is the cauſe, that is the root of your miſchief, that is the *Achan*, the troubler that offends God, and cauſes him to withdraw, and brings ſo many clouds of darkneſs upon your ſouls.

You grieve the Holy Spirit by the way in which you live; and that is the reaſon that you have no more comfort from him.

Chriſt hath promiſed, that he will manifeſt himſelf to his diſciples; but it is upon the condition, that they keep his commands: John xiv. 21. "He that hath my command-"ments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and "he that loveth me, ſhall be loved of my father; and I "will love him, and will manifeſt myſelf to him." But if you habitually live in diſobedience to any of the commandments of Chriſt, then it is no wonder that he doth not give you the comfortable manifeſtations of himſelf. The way to receive the ſpecial favours of God, and to enjoy comfortable communion with him, is to walk cloſely with him.

5. If you have been long doubting about your condition, perhaps this is the cauſe. If perſons be converted, the moſt likely way to have the evidences of it clear, and to have the Spirit of God witneſſing with our ſpirits, that we are the children of God, is to walk cloſely with God. This, as we have obſerved already, is the way to have grace in a flouriſhing ſtate in the ſoul; it is the way to have the habits of grace ſtrengthened, and the exerciſes of it lively. And the more lively the exerciſes of grace are, the more likely will they be to be ſeen. Beſides, this is the way to have God manifeſting himſelf to us, as our father and our friend, to have the manifeſtations and inward teſtimonies of his love and favour.

But if you live in ſome way of ſin, it is no wonder if that greatly darkens your evidences, as it keeps down the exerciſes of grace, and hides the light of God's countenance. And it may be that you never will come to a comfortable reſolution of that point, whether you be converted or not, until you ſhall have wholly forſaken the way of ſin in which you live.

6. If you have met with frowns of Providence, perhaps this hath been the cauſe. When you have met with very ſore rebukes and chaſtiſements, that way of ſin hath probably been your troubler. Sometimes God is exceedingly awful in his dealings with his own people in this world, for their ſins. Moſes and Aaron were not ſuffered to enter into Canaan, becauſe they believed not God, and ſpake unadviſedly with their lips, at the waters of Meribah. And how terrible was God in his dealings with David! what affliction in his family did he ſend upon him! one of his ſons raviſhing his ſiſter; another murdering his brother, and, having expelled

expelled his father out of his kingdom, openly in the ſight of all Iſrael, and in the ſight of the ſun, defiling his father's concubines on the top of the houſe, and at laſt coming to a miſerable end! Immediately after this followed the rebellion of Sheba; and he had this uncomfortable circumſtance attending the end of his life, that he ſaw another of his ſons uſurping the crown.

How awfully did God deal with Eli, for living in the ſin of not reſtraining his children from wickedneſs! He killed his two ſons in one day; brought a violent death upon Eli himſelf; took the ark from him, and ſent it into captivity; curſed his houſe for ever; and ſware that the iniquity of his houſe ſhould not be purged with ſacrifice and offering for ever; that the prieſthood ſhould be taken from him, and given to another family; and that there ſhould never be an old man in his family.

Is not ſome way of ſin in which you live the occaſion of the frowns and rebukes of Providence which you have met with? True, it is not the proper buſineſs of your neighbours to judge you with reſpect to events of Providence; but you yourſelves ought to inquire, wherefore God is contending with you, Job ix. 10.

7. If death be terrible to you, perhaps this is the foundation of it. When you think of dying, you find you ſhrink back at the thought. When you have any illneſs, or when there is any thing which ſeems any way to threaten life, you find you are affrighted by it; the thoughts of dying, and going into eternity, are awful to you; and that although you entertain a hope that you are converted. If you live in ſome way of ſin, probably this is very much the foundation of it. This keeps your minds ſenſual and worldly, and hinders a lively ſenſe of heaven and heavenly enjoyments. This keeps grace low, and prevents that reliſh of heavenly enjoyments which otherwiſe you would have. This prevents your having the comfortable ſenſe of the divine favour and preſence; and without that no wonder you cannot look death in the face without terror.

The way to have the proſpect of death comfortable, and to have undiſturbed peace and quiet when we encounter death, is, to walk cloſely with God, and to be undefiled in the way of obedience to the commands of God; and that it is otherwiſe ſometimes with truly godly perſons, is doubtleſs frequently owing to their living in ways diſpleaſing to God.

8. If you find by theſe things which have been propoſed

to you, that you have lived in a way of ſin, conſider that if you henceforward live in the ſame way, you will live in *known* ſin. Whether in time paſt it have been known ſin or not, though you may have hitherto lived in it through ignorance or inadvertence; yet if now you be ſenſible of it, henceforward, if you continue in it ſtill, it will not be a ſin of ignorance, but you will be proved to be of that claſs of men who live in ways of known ſin.

SER.

SERMON XL *

The great Guilt of thoſe who attend on the Ordinances of Divine Worſhip, and yet allow themſelves in any known Wickedneſs.

EZEK. xxiii. 37. 38. 39.

That they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands; and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have alſo cauſed their ſons whom they bare unto me, to paſs for them through the fire to devour them. Moreover, this they have done unto me; they have defiled my ſanctuary in the ſame day, and have profaned my Sabbaths. For when they had ſlain their children to their idols, then they came the ſame day into my ſanctuary to profane it; and, lo! thus have they done in the midſt of mine houſe.

SAmaria and Jeruſalem, or Iſrael and Judah, are here repreſented by two women, Aholah and Aholibah; and their idolatry and treachery towards their covenant God is repreſented by the adultery of theſe women. They forſook God, who was their huſband, and the guide of their youth, and proſtituted themſelves to others. The baſeneſs of Aholah and Aholibah towards God, their huſband, is here pointed out by two things, viz. adultery and bloodſhed: "They have committed adultery, and blood is in their "hands."

1. They committed adultery with other lovers, viz. with their idols: *With their idols have they committed adultery.*

2. They not only committed adultery, but they took their children that they bore to God, and killed them for their lovers. Their hearts were quite alienated from God, their huſband, and they were ſo bewitched with luſt after

* Not dated.

thoſe

thoſe other lovers, that they took their own children, whom they had by their huſband, and put them to cruel deaths, to make a feaſt with them for their lovers; as it is ſaid in verſ. 37. *And have alſo cauſed my ſons whom they bare unto me, to paſs for them through the fire to devour them.*

But here is a twofold wickedneſs of thoſe actions of theirs held forth to us in the words read. (1.) The wickedneſs of them conſidered in themſelves; for who can expreſs the horrid baſeneſs of this their treatment of God, their huſband? (2.) An additional wickedneſs, reſulting from the joining of theſe actions with ſacred things. Beſide the monſtrous wickedneſs of theſe actions in themſelves conſidered, there was this which exceedingly encreaſed the guilt, that on the ſame day they came into God's ſanctuary, or that they lived in ſuch wickedneſs at the ſame time that they came and attended the holy ordinances of God's houſe, pretending to worſhip and adore him, whom they all the while treated in ſuch an horrid manner; and ſo herein defiled and profaned holy things; as in verſ. 38. and 39. *Moreover, this have they done unto me; they have defiled my ſanctuary in the ſame day, and have profaned my Sabbaths. For when they had ſlain their children to their idols, then they came the ſame day into my ſanctuary, to profane it; and, lo! thus have they done in the midſt of mine houſe.*

DOCTRINE. When they that attend ordinances of divine worſhip allow themſelves in known wickedneſs, they are guilty of dreadfully profaning and polluting thoſe ordinances.

By a divine ordinance, when the expreſſion is uſed in its greateſt latitude, is meant any thing of divine inſtitution or appointment. Thus we call marriage a divine ordinance, becauſe it was appointed by God. So civil government is called an ordinance of God: Rom. xiii. 1. 2. "Let every "ſoul be ſubject to the higher powers; for there is no "power but of God; the powers that be are *ordained* of "God. Whoſoever, therefore, reſiſteth the power, reſiſt-"eth the *ordinance* of God."

But the word is more commonly uſed only for an inſtituted or appointed way or mean of worſhip. So the ſacraments are ordinances; ſo public prayer, ſinging of praiſe, the preaching of the word, and the hearing of the word preached, are divine ordinances. The ſetting apart of certain officers in the church, the appointed ways of diſcipline,

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public confeſſion of ſcandals, admonition, and excommunication, are ordinances. Theſe are called the ordinances of *God's houſe*, or of public worſhip; and theſe are intended in the doctrine: it is the profanation of theſe ordinances that is ſpoken of in the text: "They came into my ſanctuary "to profane it; and, lo! thus have they done in the midſt "of mine houſe," ſaith God. This *doctrine* ſeems to contain two *propoſitions*.

I. The ordinances of God are holy. They are ſo in the following reſpects.

1. They are converſant wholly and immediately about God, and things divine. When we are in the attendance on the ordinances of divine worſhip, we are in the ſpecial preſence of God. When perſons come and attend on the ordinances of God, they are ſaid to come before God, and to come into his preſence: Jer. vii. 10. "Come and ſtand "before me, in this houſe which is called by my name;" Pſal. c. 2. "Come into his preſence with ſinging."

In divine ordinances, perſons have immediate intercourſe with God, either in applying to him, as in prayer and ſinging praiſes, or in receiving from him, waiting ſolemnly and immediately on him for ſpiritual good, as in hearing the word; or in both applying to God and receiving from him, as in the ſacraments. They were appointed on purpoſe that in them men might converſe and hold communion with God. We are poor, ignorant, blind worms of the duſt; and God did not ſee it meet that our way of intercourſe with God ſhould be left to ourſelves; but God hath given us his ordinances, as ways and means of converſing with him.

In theſe ordinances, holy and divine things are exhibited and repreſented. In the preaching of the word, divine doctrines and the divine will are exhibited; in the ſacraments, Chriſt Jeſus and his benefits are repreſented; in prayer and praiſe, and in the attendance on the word and ſacraments, are repreſented our faith, love, and obedience.

2. The end of God's ordinances is holy. The immediate end is to glorify God. They are inſtituted to direct us in the holy exerciſes of faith and love, divine fear and reverence, ſubmiſſion, thankfulneſs, holy joy and ſorrow, holy deſires, reſolutions, and hopes. True worſhip conſiſts in theſe holy and ſpiritual exerciſes; and as theſe divine ordinances are the ordinances of worſhip, they are to help us, and to direct us in ſuch a worſhip as this.

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3. They have the ſanction of divine authority. They are not only converſant about a divine and holy object, and deſigned to direct and help us in divine and holy exerciſes, but they have a divine and holy author. The infinitely great and holy God hath appointed them, the eternal Three in One. Each perſon in the Trinity hath been concerned in their inſtitution. God the Father hath appointed them, and that by his own Son. They are of Chriſt's own appointment; and he appointed, as he had received of the Father: John xii. 49. "I have not ſpoken of myſelf, but "the Father which ſent me, he gave me commandment "what I ſhould ſay, and what I ſhould ſpeak." And the Father and Son more fully revealed and ratified them by the Spirit; and they are committed to writing by the inſpiration of the Holy Spirit.

They are holy, in that God hath hallowed them, or conſecrated them. They are converſant about holy things; and God ordained them, that in them *we* might be converſant about holy things. They are for an holy uſe; and it is God who, by his own immediate authority, ordained them for that holy uſe; which renders them much more ſacred than otherwiſe they would have been.

4. They are attended in the name of God. Thus we are commanded to do all that we do, in word or deed, in the name of Chriſt, Col. iii. 17.; which is to be underſtood eſpecially of our attendance on ordinances. Ordinances are adminiſtered in the name of God. When the word is preached by authoriſed miniſters, they ſpeak in God's name, as Chriſt's ambaſſadors, as co-workers together with Chriſt: 2 Cor. v. 20. "Now are we ambaſſadors for Chriſt;" chap. vi. 1. "We are workers together with him." When a true miniſter preaches, he ſpeaks as the oracles of God, 1 Pet. iv. 11.; and he is to be heard as one repreſenting Chriſt.

So in adminiſtering the ſacraments, the miniſter repreſents the perſon of Chriſt; he baptiſes in his name, and in the Lord's Supper ſtands in his ſtead. In adminiſtering church-cenſures, he ſtill acts, as the apoſtle expreſſes it, in the perſon of Chriſt, 2 Cor. ii. 10. On the other hand, the congregation, in their addreſſes to God in ordinances, as prayer and praiſe, act in the name of Chriſt, the Mediator, as having him to repreſent them, and as coming to God by him.

II. Theſe ordinances are dreadfully profaned by thoſe who

who attend on them, and yet allow themſelves in ways of wickedneſs. Perſons who come to the houſe of God, into the holy preſence of God, attending the duties and ordinances of his public worſhip, pretending with others, according to divine inſtitution, to call on the name of God, to praiſe him, to hear his word, and commemorate Chriſt's death, and who yet, at the ſame time, are wittingly and allowedly going on in wicked courſes, or in any practice contrary to the plain rules of the word of God, therein greatly profane the holy worſhip of God, defile the temple of God, and thoſe ſacred ordinances on which they attend. The truth of this propoſition appears by the following conſiderations.

1. By attending ordinances, and yet living in allowed wickedneſs, they ſhow great irreverence and contempt of thoſe holy ordinances. When perſons who have been committing known wickedneſs, and yet live in it, and have no other deſign than to go on ſtill in the ſame; come from their wickedneſs, as it were the ſame day, as it is expreſſed in the text, and attend the ſacred ſolemn worſhip and ordinances of God, and then go again from the houſe of God directly to the like allowed wickedneſs again; they hereby expreſs a moſt irreverent ſpirit with reſpect to holy things, and in an horrid manner caſt contempt upon God's ſacred inſtitutions, and on thoſe holy things which we are concerned with in them.

They ſhow that they have no reverence of that God who hath hallowed theſe ordinances. They ſhow a contempt of that divine authority which inſtituted them. They ſhow an horribly irreverent ſpirit towards that God into whoſe preſence they come, and with whom they immediately have to do in ordinances, and in whoſe name theſe ordinances are performed and attended. They ſhow a contempt of that adoration of God, of that faith and love, and that humiliation, ſubmiſſion, and praiſe, which ordinances were inſtituted to expreſs. What an irreverent ſpirit doth it ſhow, that they are ſo careleſs after what manner they come before God! that they take no care to cleanſe and purify themſelves, in order that they may be fit to come before God! yea, that they take no care to avoid making themſelves more and more unclean and filthy!

They have been taught many a time, that God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity, and how exceedingly he is offended with ſin; yet they care not how unclean and abominable they come into his pre-

ſence. It ſhows horrid irreverence and contempt, that they are ſo bold, that they are not afraid to come into the preſence of God in ſuch a manner; and that they will preſume to go out of the preſence of God, and from an attendance upon holy things, again to their ſinful practices. If they had any reverence of God and holy things, an approach into the preſence of God, and an attendance on thoſe holy things, would leave that awe upon their minds, that they would not dare to go immediately from them to their ways of known wickedneſs.

It would ſhow a great irreverence in any perſon towards a king, if he ſhould not care how he came into his preſence, and if he ſhould come in a very ſordid habit, and in a very indecent manner. How much more horrid irreverence doth it ſhow, for perſons willingly and allowedly to defile themſelves with that filth which God infinitely hates, and ſo frequently to come into the preſence of God!

2. By making a ſhow of reſpect to God in ordinances, and then acting the contrary in their lives, they do but mock God. In attending ordinances, they make a ſhow of reſpect to God. By joining in prayer, in public adorations, confeſſions, petitions, and thankſgivings, they make a ſhow of high thoughts of God, and of humbling themſelves before him; of ſorrow for their ſins, of thankfulneſs for mercies, and of a deſire of grace and aſſiſtance to obey and ſerve God. By attending upon the hearing of the word, they make a ſhow of a teachable ſpirit, and of a readineſs to practiſe according to the inſtructions given. By attending on the ſacraments, they make a ſhow of faith in Chriſt, of chuſing him for their portion, and of ſpiritually feeding upon him.

But by their actions they all the while declare the contrary. They declare, that they have no high eſteem of God, but that they deſpiſe him in their hearts. They declare, that they are ſo far from repenting of their ſins, that they intend to continue in their ſins. They declare, that they have no deſire of that grace and aſſiſtance to live in a holy manner for which they prayed, and that they had rather live wickedly: this is what they chuſe, and for the preſent are reſolved upon. They declare by their actions, that there is no truth in what they pretended in hearing the word preached, that they had a deſire to know what the will of God is, that they might be directed in their duty; for they declare by their actions, that they deſire not to do

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the will of God, and that they do not intend any ſuch thing; but intend, on the contrary, to diſobey him; and that they prefer their carnal intereſts before his authority and glory.

They declare by their actions, that there is no truth in what they pretend in their attendance on the ſacraments, that they deſire to be fed with ſpiritual nouriſhment, and to be conformed and aſſimilated to Chriſt, and to have communion with him. They ſhow by their practices, that they have no regard to Chriſt; and that they had rather have their luſts gratified, than to be fed with his ſpiritual food: They ſhow, that they deſire not any aſſimilation to Chriſt, but to be different from him, and of an oppoſite character to him: They ſhow, that inſtead of deſiring communion with Chriſt, they are his reſolved and allowed enemies, wilfully acting the part of enemies to Chriſt, diſhonouring him, and promoting the intereſt of Satan againſt him.

Now, what can this be elſe but mockery, to make a ſhow of great reſpect, reverence, love, and obedience, and at the ſame time wilfully to declare the reverſe in actions. If a rebel or traitor ſhould ſend addreſſes to his king, making a ſhow of great loyalty and fidelity, and ſhould all the while openly, and in the King's ſight, carry on deſigns of dethroning him, how could his addreſſes be conſidered as any other than mockery? If a man ſhould bow and kneel before his ſuperior, and uſe many reſpectful terms to him, but at the ſame time ſhould ſtrike him, or ſpit in his face, would his bowing and his reſpectful terms be looked upon in any other light than as done in mockery? When the Jews kneeled before Chriſt, and ſaid, "Hail, King of the Jews," but at the ſame time ſpit in his face, and ſmote him upon the head with a reed; could their kneeling and ſalutations be conſidered as any other than mockery?

Men who attend ordinances, and yet willingly live in wicked practices, treat Chriſt in the ſame manner that theſe Jews did. They come to public worſhip, and pretend to pray to him, to ſing his praiſes, to ſit and hear his word; they come to the ſacrament, pretending to commemorate his death. Thus they kneel before him, and ſay, "Hail, "King of the Jews;" yet at the ſame time they live in ways of wickedneſs, which they know Chriſt hath forbidden, of which he hath declared the greateſt hatred, and which are exceedingly to his diſhonour. Thus they buffet him, and ſpit in his face. They do as Judas did, who came to Chriſt

ſaying, "Hail, Maſter," and kiſſed him, at the ſame time betraying him into the hands of thoſe who ſought his life.

How can it be interpreted in any other light, when men come to public worſhip, and attend ordinances, and yet will be drunkards and profane ſwearers, will live in laſciviouſneſs, injuſtice, or ſome other known wickedneſs? If a man ſhould pray to God to keep him from drunkenneſs, and at the ſame time ſhould put the bottle to his own mouth, and drink himſelf drunk; the abſurdity and horrid wickedneſs of his conduct would be manifeſt to every man. But the very ſame thing, though not ſo viſible to us, is done by thoſe who make profeſſion of great reſpect to God, and pray God from time to time to keep them from ſin; yet at the ſame time have no deſign to forſake their known ſins, but intend the contrary.

God ſees men's deſigns and reſolutions more plainly than we can ſee their outward actions; therefore for a man to pray to God to be kept from ſin, and at the ſame time to intend to ſin, is mockery as viſible to God as if he prayed to be kept from ſome particular ſin, which he was at the ſame time willingly and allowedly committing.

Theſe perſons are guilty of an horrid profanation of God's ordinances; for they make them occaſions of a greater affront to God, the occaſions of ſhowing their impudence and preſumption; for he who lives in wilful wickedneſs, and doth not enjoy the ordinances of God, is not guilty of ſo great preſumption, as he who attends theſe ordinances, and yet allows himſelf in wickedneſs. This latter acts as though he came into the preſence of God on purpoſe to affront him. He comes from time to time to hear the will of God, and all the while deſigns diſobedience, and goes away and acts directly contrary to it.

A ſervant would affront his maſter by wilfully diſobeying his commands in any wiſe. But he would affront him much more, if he ſhould on every occaſion come to him to inquire his will, as though he were ready to do whatever his maſter would have him do, and then ſhould immediately go away and do the contrary.

3. They put the ordinances of God to a profane uſe. The ordinances of God are holy, as they are ſet apart of God to an holy uſe and purpoſe. They are the worſhip of God, inſtituted for the ends of giving honour and glory to God, and to be means of grace and ſpiritual good to us. But thoſe perſons who attend theſe ordinances, and yet live in allowed wickedneſs, aim at neither of theſe ends: they,

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in their attendance on ordinances, neither aim to give honour to God, or to expreſs any love, or eſteem, or thankfulneſs; nor do they ſincerely ſeek the good of their own ſouls. It is not truly the aim of any ſuch perſons to obtain grace, or to be made holy; their actions plainly ſhow that this is not their deſire; they chuſe to be wicked, and intend it.

It is not therefore to theſe purpoſes that they improve the holy ordinances of God; but they put them to another and profane uſe. They attend ordinances to avoid that diſcredit which a voluntary and habitual abſence from them would cauſe among thoſe with whom they live, or to avoid the puniſhment of human laws, or for their worldly advantage, or to make up for other wickedneſs, or for ſome other carnal purpoſes. Thus they profane the ordinances of God, by perverting them to profane purpoſes.

4. When perſons thus treat God's holy ordinances, it tends to beget contempt of them in others. When others ſee ſacred things commonly uſed ſo irreverently, and attended with ſuch careleſſneſs and contempt, and treated without any ſacred regard; when they ſee perſons are bold with them, treat them without any ſolemnity of ſpirit; when they ſee them thus commonly profaned, it tends to diminiſh their ſenſe of the ſacredneſs of them, and to make them ſeem no very awful things. In ſhort, it tends to embolden them to do the like.

The holy veſſels and utenſils of the temple and tabernacle were never to be put to a common uſe, nor to be handled without the greateſt care and reverence: for if it had been commonly otherwiſe, the reverence of them could not have been maintained; they would have ſeemed no more ſacred than any thing elſe. So it is in the ordinances of Chriſtian worſhip.

SER.

SERMON XII.

The great Guilt of thoſe who attend on the Ordinances of Divine Worſhip, and yet allow themſelves in any known Sin.

EZEK. xxiii. 37. 38. 39.

That they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands; and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have alſo cauſed their ſons whom they bare unto me, to paſs for them through the fire to devour them. Moreover, this they have done unto me; they have defiled my ſanctuary in the ſame day, and have profaned my Sabbaths. For when they had ſlain their children to their idols, then they came the ſame day into my ſanctuary to profane it; and, lo! thus have they done in the midſt of mine houſe.

DOCTRINE. WHEN thoſe who attend the ordinances of divine worſhip allow themſelves in known wickedneſs, they are guilty of dreadfully profaning and polluting thoſe ordinances.

Having already ſaid what I propoſed upon this propoſition in the doctrinal way, I now proceed to make

APPLICATION.

I. Let this doctrine put all upon *examining* themſelves, whether they do not allow themſelves in known wickedneſs. You are ſuch as do enjoy the ordinances of divine worſhip. You come hither from time to time into the houſe of God, and into the holy preſence of God, attending on thoſe ordinances, which God, by his ſacred authority, hath hallowed and ſet apart, that in them we might have immediate intercourſe

tercourſe with himſelf; that we might worſhip and adore him, and expreſs to him an humble, holy, ſupreme reſpect; and that in them we might receive immediate communications from him.

Here you come and ſpeak to God, pretending to expreſs your ſenſe how glorious he is, and how worthy that you ſhould fear and love him, humble yourſelves before him, devote yourſelves to him, obey him, and have a greater reſpect to his commands and to his honour, than to any temporal intereſt, eaſe, or pleaſure of your own. Here you pretend before God, that you are ſenſible how unworthily you have done in the ſins you have committed in times paſt, and that you have a great deſire not to do the like in time to come. You pretend to confeſs your ſins, and to humble yourſelves for them. Here you pray that God would give you his ſpirit to aſſiſt you againſt ſin, to keep you from the commiſſion of it, enable you to overcome temptations, and help you to walk holily in all your converſation, as though you really had a great deſire to avoid ſuch ſins as you have been guilty of in time paſt. And the like pretences you have made in your attendance upon the other ordinances, as in hearing the word, in ſinging praiſe, &c.

But conſider whether you do not horribly defile and profane the public prayers and other ordinances. Notwithſtanding all your pretences, and what you ſeem to hold forth by your attendance on them, do you not all the while live in known wickedneſs againſt God? For all your pretences of reſpect to God, of humiliation for ſin, and deſires to avoid it, have you not come directly from the allowed practice of known ſin, which you have been practiſing that very week before, from day to day, and from night to night, and ſome times the very day before; and did not at all repent of what you had done, were not at all ſorry for it then, at the very time when you ſtood before God, making theſe pretences; and even had no deſign of reformation, but intended to return to the ſame practice again after your departure from the preſence of God?——I ſay, Hath not this on many occaſions been your manner of coming and attending on the ordinances of divine worſhip? Not only ſo, but is it not ſtill your manner, your common way of attending upon theſe ordinances, even to this very day? Do you not lie to God with your tongues, when you pretend, that he is a great God, and that you are poor, guilty, unworthy creatures, deſerving his wrath by the ſins you have been guilty of? and when you pretend, that you earneſtly

earneſtly deſire that he would keep you from the like for time to come? Are you not guilty of horrid mockery of God in it, when at the ſame time you deſign no ſuch thing, but the contrary?

Do you not even the ſame day that you come into God's houſe, and to his ordinances, allow yourſelves in known ſins? Do you not with conſent and approbation think of the ſinful practices, in which you allow yourſelves, and in which you have been exerciſing yourſelves in the week paſt? Do you not the very day in which you attend ordinances, allowedly pleaſe and gratify a wicked imagination? And are you not then perpetrating wickedneſs in your thoughts, and contriving the further fulfilment of your wickedneſs? Yea, are you not guilty of theſe things ſome times even in the very time of your attendance on ordinances, when you are in the immediate preſence of God? And while others have immediate intercourſe with God, and you likewiſe pretend to the ſame? Do you not even in theſe circumſtances allow yourſelves in wicked thoughts and imaginations, voluntarily wallowing in known wickedneſs?

Are not ſome of you guilty of allowedly breaking God's Holy Sabbath, in maintaining no government of your thoughts, thinking indifferently about any thing that comes next to mind; and not only thinking, but talking too about common, worldly affairs? And ſometimes talking in ſuch a manner, as is not ſuitable even on other days; talking profanely, or in an unclean manner, ſporting and diverting yourſelves in ſuch converſation on God's holy day? Yea, it is well if ſome have not been thus guilty in the very time of attendance on the ordinances of worſhip.

Examine yourſelves, how it hath been with you. You all attend many of the ordinances of divine worſhip. You come to the houſe of God, attend public prayers, ſinging, and preaching of the word; and many of you come to the Lord's Supper, that holy ordinance, inſtituted for the ſpecial commemoration of the greateſt and moſt wonderful of all divine acts towards mankind; for the ſpecial and viſible repreſentation of the moſt glorious and wonderful things of our religion; for the moſt ſolemn profeſſion and renewal of our engagement to God; and for ſpecial communion with Jeſus Chriſt. Let ſuch examine themſelves whether they do not allow themſelves in known ſin, to the horrid profanation and pollution of this moſt ſacred ordinance.

Examine and ſee whether you do not allow yourſelves in ſome

ſome way of dealing with your fellow-men, which you have ſufficient light to know to be evil; or whether you do not allow yourſelves in a known evil behaviour towards ſome perſon or perſons of the families to which you reſpectively belong, as towards your huſbands, your wives, your children or ſervants; or towards your neighbours, in your ſpirit and behaviour towards them, or in your talk of them.

Examine whether you do not ſome way willingly indulge an unclean appetite, in leſs or groſſer acts of uncleanneſs, or in your diſcourſe, or in your imagination. Or do you not give way to a luſt after ſtrong drink, or indulge yourſelves in ſome vicious exceſs in gratifying ſome ſenſual appetite in meat or drink, or otherwiſe? Are you not willingly guilty of vanity, and extravagance in your converſation.

Do you not, for all your attendance on ordinances, continue in the allowed neglect of your precious ſouls, neglecting ſecret prayer or ſome known duty of private religion? Or do you not allow yourſelves in Sabbath-breaking? —— In all theſe ways are the ordinances of God's ſacred worſhip polluted and profaned.

Men are apt to act very treacherouſly and perverſely in the matter of ſelf-examination. When they are put upon examining themſelves, they will very often decline it, and will not enter into any ſerious examination of themſelves at all. They hear uſes of examination inſiſted on, but put them off to others, and never ſeriouſly apply them to themſelves. —— And if they do examine themſelves, when they are put upon it, they are exceedingly partial to themſelves; they ſpare themſelves; they do not ſearch, and look, and paſs a judgement according to truth; but ſo as unreaſonably to favour and juſtify themſelves. ——So, without doubt in the preſent caſe, ſome who are here, if they can be brought to examine themſelves at all, whether they do not allow themſelves in known wickedneſs, although they attend on divine ordinances; will not do it impartially: their endeavour will not be indeed to know the truth of their caſe, and to give a true anſwer to their conſciences; but to blind themſelves, to perſuade and flatter themſelves that they do not allow themſelves in known ſin, whether it be true or not. There are two things eſpecially wherein perſons often act very perverſely and fallely in this matter.

1. In pretending that the ſins in which they live are not known ſins. 2. When they cannot but confeſs that they

are known, in pretending that they allow not themſelves in them.

1. Perſons very often deal very perverſely in pretending, that the ſins in which they live are not known ſins. Nothing is more common ſurely, than for perſons to flatter themſelves with this concerning the wickedneſs in which they live. Let that wickedneſs be almoſt what it will, they will plead to their conſciences and endeavour to ſtill them, that there is no evil in it, or that they do not *know* that there is any evil in it. Mens own conſciences can beſt tell how they are wont to do in this matter.——There is hardly any kind of wickedneſs that men commit, but they will plead thus in excuſe for it. They will plead thus about their cheating and injuſtice, about their hatred of their neighbours, about their evil-ſpeaking, about their revengeful ſpirit, about their exceſſive drinking, about their lying, their neglect of ſecret prayer, their laſciviouſneſs, their unclean dalliances; yea, they will plead excuſes for very groſs acts of uncleanneſs, as fornication, adultery, and what not. They have their vain excuſes and carnal reaſonings in favour of all their evil actions. They will ſay, What hurt, what evil is there in ſuch or ſuch an action? And if there be a plain rule againſt it, yet they will plead that their circumſtances are peculiar, and that they are excepted from the general rule; that their temptation is ſo great, that they are excuſable; or ſome thing or other will they find to plead.

If it be ſome thing upon which their luſts are much ſet, and about which they feel remorſe of conſcience, they will never leave ſtudying and contriving with all the art and ſubtilty they are maſters of, till they ſhall have found out ſome reaſon, ſome excuſe, with which they ſhall be able in ſome meaſure to quiet their conſciences. And whether after all they ſhall have made it out to blind conſcience or not, yet they will plead that their argument is good, and it is no ſin; or if it be a ſin, it is only a ſin of ignorance.——So men will plead for the wickedneſs which they do in the dark. So without doubt ſome very *groſs* ſinners plead to their conſciences; as would appear, if we could but look into their hearts; when indeed the ſtrongeſt argument they have, that in ſuch a thing there is no evil, is the ſtrong luſt they have to it, the inordinate deſire they have to commit it.

It was the ſaying of one, *Licitis perimus omnes;* that is, *we all periſh by lawful things;* which is as much as to ſay, men commonly live wickedly and go to hell, in thoſe ways which they flatter themſelves to be lawful. Or at leaſt they

flatter

flatter themſelves, that they are ſins of ignorance; they do not know them to be unlawful.——Thus I make no doubt but ſome here preſent will be apt to do now, in applying to themſelves this uſe of examination, if they can be perſuaded to apply it to themſelves at all. Whether theſe things be true of you, let your own conſciences ſpeak, you that neglect ſecret prayer; you that live in ſecret, unclean, laſcivious actions; you that indulge an inordinate appetite for ſtrong drink; you that defraud or oppreſs others; you that indulge a ſpirit of revenge and hatred towards your neighbour.——Here I deſire you to conſider two or three things.

(1.) Not all ſins, which one knows not with a certain knowledge to be ſinful, are juſtly called ſins of ignorance. Men often will excuſe themſelves for venturing upon a ſinful action or practice, with this, that they know not that it is ſinful; which is at moſt true no otherwiſe, than as they do not know it to be ſinful with a *certain* knowledge, or with the evidence of abſolute demonſtration; although at the ſame time it is a ſin againſt their light, and againſt great light. They have been ſo taught, that they have had light enough to make them ſenſible that it is diſpleaſing to God, and not warranted or allowed by him. And they do in their conſciences think it to be ſinful; they are ſecretly convinced of it, however they may pretend the contrary, and labour to deceive themſelves and to perſuade themſelves that they do not think there is any evil in it.

Thoſe ſins which are contrary to ſufficient information and inſtruction, and contrary to the real dictates of their own conſciences, or to the judgement of their own minds; whether there be certain or demonſtrative knowledge or no; theſe are what I would be underſtood to mean, when I ſpeak of known ſins. Such light as this, whether there be abſolutely certain knowledge or no, is ſufficient to render the action utterly inexcuſable, and to render it, when allowed, an horrible profanation and pollution of the holy ordinances of God.

(2.) It is in vain for perſons to pretend that thoſe ſins are ſins of ignorance, which they have often and clearly heard teſtified againſt from the word of God. It will be found to be ſo at laſt; it will be found to be a vain thing for perſons who have lived under the light of the goſpel, and where all manner of iniquity is teſtified againſt, as it hath been in this town, if they live in immoral and vicious practices, to pretend that they are ſins of ignorance; unleſs the caſe be very peculiar and extraordinary.

(3.) It is in vain for you to pretend that thoſe ſins are ſins of ignorance, of which you would not dare to proceed in the practice, if you knew that your ſoul was to be required of you this night. Perſons do many things, for which they plead, and pretend they think there is no evil in them, who yet would as ſoon eat fire, as do the ſame, if they knew that they were to ſtand before the judgement-ſeat of Chriſt within four and twenty hours. This ſhows that perſons do but prevaricate, when they pretend that their ſins are ſins of ignorance.

2. Another way wherein men deal falſely and perverſely in this matter, is, in pretending that they do not allow themſelves in thoſe ſins which they practiſe. They either pretend that they know them not to be ſins, or if they cannot but own that, then they will ſay, they do not allow themſelves in them; and ſo they hope God is not very much provoked by them. They pretend this, though they make a trade of them. They go on repeating one act after another, without ever ſeriouſly repenting of paſt, or reſolving againſt future acts. But take heed that you do not deceive yourſelves in this matter; for ſuch pretences, however they do ſomething towards ſtilling your conſciences now, will do nothing when you come to ſtand before your righteous and holy Judge.

II. This doctrine reproves and warns ſuch as attend on ordinances, and yet allow themſelves in known ſin.

Conſider thoſe things that have been ſaid. Conſider how holy and ſacred the ordinances of God are, and what mockery you are guilty of in making ſuch a ſhow, and ſuch pretences, as you do in attending ordinances, and yet voluntarily acting the reverſe of what you pretend. Conſider that there is no ſort of ſinners with whom God is ſo provoked, and who ſtand ſo guilty before God, as the profaners of ordinances. The fire of God's wrath is kindled by none ſo much as by the polluters of holy things. They are repreſented as thoſe who are eſpecially holden guilty before God, in the third commandment: "The Lord will not hold "him guiltleſs that taketh his name in vain." Why is this annexed to this command, rather than to any other of the ten, but becauſe the breach of it eſpecially renders a man guilty in the ſight of God?

The taking of God's name in vain includes the profanation and pollution of ordinances and holy things. They do in a very dreadful manner take God's name in vain, who attend

tend on his ordinances, and yet live in known ſin; for, as we have ſhown, they manifeſt the greateſt irreverence and contempt of God and divine things. They manifeſt a contempt of his authority, a contempt of the buſineſs and deſign of his ordinances, and a moſt careleſs and irreverent ſpirit in things wherein they have immediate converſe with God. Ordinances, as we have ſhown, are attended in the name of God; and therefore, by ſuch an attendance on them, the name of God is greatly profaned. You that attend ordinances in ſuch a manner, take the name of God ſo much in vain, that you uſe it only in mockery, and ſo as to expoſe it to contempt. Such a way of attending ordinances is a trampling of all that is ſacred under foot.

We have in ſcripture ſcarce any ſuch awful inſtances of the immediate and miraculous vengeance of God, as on the profaners of holy things. How did God conſume Nadab and Abihu, for offering ſtrange fire before him! How did he break forth upon Uzza, for handling the ark with too much irreverence! 2 Sam. vi. 6. 7. And how did he break forth on the children of Iſrael at Bethſhemeſh, for profaning the ark! He ſmote of the people fifty thouſand three ſcore and ten men, as in 1 Sam. vi. 19.

And God hath threatened in the New Teſtament, that if any man "defile the temple of God, him ſhall God de-"ſtroy; for the temple of God is holy," 1 Cor. iii. 17. There is an emphaſis in the expreſſion. God will deſtroy all ſinners, let it be what ſin it will, which they commit, and in which they continue; and yet it is ſaid, "If any man "defile the temple of God, *him* ſhall God deſtroy;" as if it had been ſaid, There is ſomething peculiar in the caſe, and God is eſpecially provoked to deſtroy ſuch, and conſume them in the fire of his wrath; and he will indeed deſtroy them with a deſtruction eſpecially dreadful.

So God hath declared, Gal. vi. 7. that he will not be mocked; i. e. if any preſume to mock him, they will find him, by experience, to be no contemptible being. God will vindicate his holy majeſty from the contempt of thoſe who dare to mock him, and he will do it effectually: they ſhall fully find how dreadful a being he is, whoſe name they have daringly profaned and polluted. Defilers and profaners of ordinances, by known and allowed wickedneſs, provoke God more than the Heathen, who have no ordinances. Thus the wickedneſs of Judah and Jeruſalem is ſaid to be far worſe than that of Sodom, though the inhabitants of Sodom were, as we have reaſon to think, ſome of the worſt

of

of the Heathens. See Ezek. xvi. 46. 47. &c. The ſin of Sodom is here ſpoken of as a light thing in compariſon with the ſins of Judah. And what ſhould be the reaſon, but that Judah enjoyed holy things, which they profaned and polluted, which Sodom had no opportunity to do? for it is not to be ſuppoſed, that Judah otherwiſe arrived to the ſame paſs that Sodom had.

Conſider therefore, ye who allow yourſelves in known wickedneſs, and live in it, who yet come hither to the houſe of God, and to his ordinances from time to time, without any ſerious deſign of forſaking your ſins, but, on the contrary, with an intention of continuing in them, and who frequently go from the houſe of God to your wicked practices; conſider how guilty you have made yourſelves in the ſight of God, and how dreadfully God is provoked by you. It is a wonder of God's patience, that he doth not break forth upon you, and ſtrike you dead in a moment; for you profane holy things in a more dreadful manner than Uzza did, when yet God ſtruck him dead for his error. And whereas he was ſtruck dead for only one profanation of holy things, you are guilty of the ſame ſin from week to week, and from day to day.

It is a wonder that God ſuffers you to live upon earth, that he hath not, with a thunderbolt of his wrath, ſtruck you down to the bottomleſs pit long ago. You that are here in the houſe of God, and yet are allowedly and voluntarily living in ſin, who have gone on hitherto in ſin, are ſtill going on, and do not deſign any other than to go on yet; it is a wonder that the Almighty's thunder lies ſtill, and ſuffers you to ſit in God's houſe, or to live upon earth. It is a wonder that the earth will bear you, and that hell doth not ſwallow you up. It is a wonder that fire doth not come down from heaven, or come up from hell, and devour you; that hell-flames do not enlarge themſelves to reach you, and that the bottomleſs pit hath not ſwallowed you up.

However, that you are as yet borne with, is no argument that your damnation ſlumbers. The anger of God is not like the paſſions of men, that it ſhould be in haſte. There is a day of vengeance and recompence appointed for the veſſels of wrath; and when the day ſhall have come, and the iniquity ſhall be full, none ſhall deliver out of God's hand. Then will God recompenſe, even recompenſe into your boſoms.

SER.

SERMON XIII.*

The World judged righteouſly by Jeſus Chriſt.

ACTS, xvii. 31.

Becauſe he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained.

THESE words are a part of the ſpeech which Paul made in Mars-hill, a place of the concourſe of the judges and learned men of Athens. Athens was the principal city of that part of Greece which was formerly a commonwealth by itſelf, and was the moſt noted place in the whole world for learning, philoſophy, and human wiſdom; and it continued ſo for many ages; till at length the Romans having conquered Greece, its renown from that time began to diminiſh; and Rome having borrowed learning of it, began to rival it in ſcience, and in the polite and civil arts. However, it was ſtill very famous in the days of Chriſt and the apoſtles, and was a place of the concourſe of wiſe and learned men.

Therefore, when Paul came thither, and began to preach up his doctrine concerning Jeſus Chriſt, a man who had lately been crucified at Jeruſalem, as we are informed in the 18th verſe, the philoſophers thronged about him, to hear what he had to ſay. The ſtrangeneſs of his doctrine excited their curioſity; for they ſpent their time in endeavouring to find out new things, and valued themſelves greatly upon their being the authors of new diſcoveries, as we are informed in verſ. 21. They deſpiſed his doctrine in their hearts, and eſteemed it very ridiculous, calling the apoſtle a babler; for the preaching of Chriſt crucified was to the Greeks fooliſhneſs, 1 Cor. i. 23.; yet the Epicurean and

* Not dated.

Stoick

Stoick philoſophers, two different ſects, had a mind to hear what the babler had to ſay.

Upon this Paul riſes up in the midſt of them, and makes a ſpeech; and as he ſpeaks to philoſophers and men of learning, he ſpeaks quite differently from his common mode of addreſs. There is evidently, in his diſcourſe, a greater depth of thought, more philoſophical reaſoning, and a more elevated ſtyle, than are to be found in his ordinary diſcourſes to common men. His ſpeech is ſuch as was likely to draw the attention, and gain the aſſent of philoſophers. He ſhows himſelf to be no babler, but a man who could offer ſuch reaſon, as they, however they valued themſelves upon their wiſdom, were not able to gainſay. His practice here is agreeable to what he ſaith of himſelf, 1 Cor. ix. 22. that he became all things to all men, that he might by all means ſave ſome. He not only to the weak became as weak, that he might gain the weak; but to the wiſe he became as wiſe, that he might gain the wiſe.

In the firſt place, he reaſons with them concerning their worſhip of idols. He declares to them the true God, and points out how unreaſonable it is to ſuppoſe, that he delights in ſuch ſuperſtitious worſhip. He begins with this, becauſe they were moſt likely to hearken to it, as being ſo evidently agreeable to the natural light of human reaſon, and alſo agreeable to what ſome of their own poets and philoſophers had ſaid, as he tells them in verſ. 28. He begins not immediately to tell them about Jeſus Chriſt, his dying for ſinners, and his reſurrection from the dead; but firſt draws their attention with that to which they were more likely to hearken; and then, having thus introduced himſelf, he proceeds to ſpeak concerning Jeſus Chriſt.

He tells them, the times of this ignorance concerning the true God, in which they had hitherto been, God winked at; he ſuffered the world to lie in heatheniſh darkneſs; but now the appointed time was come, when he expected *men ſhould every where repent*; "becauſe he had appointed a "day, in the which he will judge the world in righteouſ-"neſs, by that man whom he hath ordained." As an enforcement to the duty of turning to God from their ignorance, ſuperſtition, and idolatry, the apoſtle brings in this, that God had appointed ſuch a day of judgement. And as a proof of this, he brings the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead.

Concerning the words of the text, we may obſerve,

1. That

1. That in them the apoſtle ſpeaks of the general judgement: *He will judge the* WORLD.
2. The time when this ſhall be, on the appointed day: *He hath appointed a day.*
3. How the world is to be judged: *In righteouſneſs.*
4. The man by whom it is to be judged: *Chriſt Jeſus, whom God raiſed from the dead.*

DOCTRINE. There is a day coming, in which there will be a general righteous judgement of the whole world, by Jeſus Chriſt.

In ſpeaking upon this ſubject, I ſhall,
1. Show that God is the ſupreme judge of the world.
2. That there is a time coming, when God will, in the moſt public and ſolemn manner, judge the whole world.
3. That the perſon by whom he will judge it is Jeſus Chriſt.
4. I ſhall give ſome account of the tranſactions of that day.
5. Show that all ſhall be done in righteouſneſs.
6. Take notice of thoſe things which ſhall be immediately conſequent upon the judgement.

I. God is the ſupreme judge of the world.

1. God is ſo by right. He is by right the ſupreme and abſolute ruler and diſpoſer of all things, both in the natural and moral world. The rational underſtanding part of the creation is indeed ſubject to a different ſort of government from that to which thoſe creatures that are without reaſon are ſubject. God governs the ſun, moon, and ſtars; he governs even the motes of duſt which fly in the air. Not an hair of our heads falleth to the ground without our heavenly Father. God alſo governs the brute creatures; by his providence, he orders, according to his own decrees, all events concerning thoſe creatures. And rational creatures are ſubject to the ſame ſort of government; all their actions, and all events relating to them, being ordered by ſuperior providence, according to abſolute decrees; ſo that no event that relates to them ever happens without the diſpoſal of God, according to his own decrees. The rule of this ſort of government is God's wiſe decree, and nothing elſe.

But rational creatures, becauſe they are intelligent and voluntary agents, are the ſubjects of another kind of go-

vernment. They are ſo only with reſpect to thoſe of their actions, in which they are *cauſes by counſel*, or with reſpect to their voluntary actions. The government of which I now ſpeak is called *moral* government, and conſiſts in two things, in giving laws, and in judging.

God is, with reſpect to this ſort of government, by right the ſovereign ruler of the world. He is poſſeſſed of this right by reaſon of his infinite greatneſs and excellency, by which he merits, and is perfectly and ſolely fit for, the office of ſupreme ruler. He that is ſo excellent as to be infinitely worthy of the higheſt reſpect of the creature, hath thereby a right to that reſpect; he deſerves it by a merit of condignity; ſo that it is injuſtice to deny it to him. And he that is perfectly wiſe and true, and is only ſo, he hath a right in every thing to be hearkened to, and to have his determinations attended to and obeyed.

God hath alſo a right to the character of ſupreme ruler, by reaſon of the abſolute dependence of every creature on him. All creatures, and rational creatures no leſs than others, are wholly derived from him, and every moment are wholly dependent upon him for being, and for all good: ſo that they are properly his poſſeſſion. And as, by virtue of this, he hath a right to give his creatures whatever rules of conduct he pleaſes, or whatever rules are agreeable to his own wiſdom; ſo the mind and will of the creature ought to be entirely conformed to the nature and will of the Creator, and to the rules he gives, that are expreſſive of it.

For the ſame reaſon, he hath a right to judge their actions and conduct, and to fulfil the ſanction of his law. He who hath an abſolute and independent right to give laws, hath evermore the ſame right to judge thoſe to whom the laws are given.

It is abſolutely neceſſary that there ſhould be a judge of reaſonable creatures; and ſanctions, or rewards and puniſhments, annexed to rules of conduct, are neceſſary to the being of laws. A perſon may inſtruct another without ſanctions, but not give laws. However, theſe ſanctions themſelves are vain, are as good as none, without a judge to determine the execution of them.

As God hath a right to be judge, ſo hath he a right to be the *ſupreme* judge; and none hath a right to reverſe his judgements, to receive appeals from him, or to ſay to him, Why judgeſt thou thus?

2. God is *in fact* the ſupreme judge of the world. He hath

hath power ſufficient to vindicate his own right. As he hath a right which cannot be diſputed, ſo he hath power which cannot be controuled. He is poſſeſſed of omnipotence, wherewith to maintain his dominion over the world; and he doth maintain his dominion in the moral as well as the natural world. Men may refuſe ſubjection to God as a lawgiver; they may ſhake off the yoke of his laws by rebellion; yet they cannot withdraw themſelves from being under him as a judge. Although they will not have God for their lawgiver, yet they ſhall have him for their judge. The ſtrongeſt of creatures can do nothing to controul God, or to avoid him acting in his judicial capacity. He is able to bring them to his judgement-ſeat, and is alſo able to execute the ſentence which he ſhall pronounce.

There was once a notable attempt made by oppoſition of power entirely to ſhake off the yoke of the moral government of God, both as lawgiver, and as judge. This attempt was made by the angels, the moſt mighty of creatures; but they miſerably failed in it: God notwithſtanding acted as their judge in caſting thoſe proud ſpirits out of heaven, and binding them in chains of darkneſs unto a further judgement, and a further execution. "God is wiſe in "heart and mighty in ſtrength; who hath hardened him-"ſelf againſt him, and hath proſpered?" Job ix. 4. Wherein the enemies of God deal proudly, he is above them. He ever hath acted as judge in beſtowing what rewards, and inflicting what puniſhments he pleaſed on the children of men: and ſo he doth ſtill; he is daily fulfilling the promiſes and threatenings of the law, in diſpoſing of the ſouls of the children of men, and ſo he evermore will act.

God acteth as judge towards the children of men more eſpecially,

(1.) In man's particular judgement at death. Then the ſentence is executed, and the reward beſtowed *in part;* which is not done without a judgement. The ſoul, when it departs from the body, appears before God to be diſpoſed of by him, according to his law. But by this appearing before God, to be judged at death, we need underſtand no more than this, that the ſoul is made immediately ſenſible of the preſence of God, God manifeſting himſelf immediately to the ſoul, with the glory and majeſty of a judge; that the ſins of the wicked, and the righteouſneſs of the ſaints, are brought by God to the view of their conſciences, ſo that they know the reaſon of the ſentence given, and their conſciences are made to teſtify to the juſtice of it; and

that thus the will of God for the fulfilment of the law, in their reward or puniſhment, is made known to them, and executed. This is undoubtedly done at every man's death.

(2.) In the great and general judgement, when all men ſhall together appear before the judgement-ſeat to be judged: which judgement will be much more ſolemn, and the ſanctions of the law will to a further degree be fulfilled.—— But this brings me to ſhow,

II. That there is a time coming when God will in the moſt public and ſolemn manner judge the whole world of mankind.——The doctrine of a general judgement is not ſufficiently diſcoverable by the light of nature. Indeed ſome of the heathens had ſome obſcure notions concerning a future judgement. But the light of nature, or mere unaſſiſted reaſon, was not ſufficient to inſtruct the world of fallen men in this doctrine. It is one of the peculiar doctrines of revelation, a doctrine of the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt. There were indeed ſome hints of it in the Old Teſtament, as in Pſal. xcvi. 13. "The Lord cometh to judge the world with "righteouſneſs, and his people with his truth." And Eccl. xii. 14. "For God will bring every work into judgement, "with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it "be evil." And in ſome other ſuch like paſſages. But this doctrine is with abundantly the greateſt clearneſs revealed in the New Teſtament: there we have it frequently and particularly declared and deſcribed with its circumſtances.

However, although it be a doctrine of revelation, and be brought to light by the goſpel, the brighteſt and moſt glorious revelation that God hath given to the world; yet it is a doctrine which is entirely agreeable to reaſon, and of which reaſon gives great confirmation. That there will be a time before the diſſolution of the world, when the inhabitants of it ſhall ſtand before God, and give an account of their conduct; and that God will in a public manner, by a general and juſt judgement, ſet all things to rights reſpecting their moral behaviour, is a doctrine entirely agreeable to reaſon; which I ſhall now endeavour to make appear. But I would premiſe, that what we would inquire into, is not whether all mankind ſhall be judged by God; for that is a thing that the light of nature clearly teaches, and we have already ſpoken ſomething of it: but whether it be rational to think that there will be a *public* judgement of all mankind *together*. This I think will appear very rational from the following conſiderations.

1. Such

1. Such a judgement will be a more glorious diſplay of God's majeſty and dominion: it will be more glorious, becauſe it will be more open, public, and ſolemn.——Altho' God now actually exerciſes the moſt ſovereign dominion over the earth; although he reigns and doth all things according to his own will, ordering all events as ſeemeth to himſelf good; and although he is actually judge in the earth, continually diſpoſing of men's ſouls according to their works; yet he rules after a more hidden and ſecret manner, inſomuch that it is common among the proud ſons of men to refuſe to acknowledge his dominion. Wicked men queſtion the very exiſtence of a God, who taketh care of the world, who ordereth the affairs of it, and judgeth in it; and therefore they caſt off the fear of him. Many of the kings and great men of the earth do not ſuitably acknowledge the God who is above them, but ſeem to look upon themſelves as ſupreme, and therefore tyrannize over mankind, as if they were in no wiſe accountable for their conduct. There have been, and now are, many atheiſtical perſons, who acknowledge not God's moral dominion over mankind; and therefore they throw off the yoke of his laws and government. And how great a part of the world is there now, and has there always been, that has not acknowledged that the government of the world belongs to the God of Iſrael, or to the God of Chriſtians; but has paid homage to other imaginary deities, as though they were their ſovereign lords and ſupreme judges. Over how great a part of the world hath Satan uſurped the dominion, and ſet up himſelf as God, in oppoſition to the true God?

Now, how agreeable to reaſon is it, that God, in the winding up of things, when the preſent ſtate of mankind ſhall come to a concluſion, ſhould, in the moſt open and public manner, manifeſt his dominion over the inhabitants of the earth, by bringing them all, high and low, rich and poor, kings and ſubjects, together before him to be judged with reſpect to all that they ever did in the world: that he ſhould thus openly diſcover his dominion in this world, where his authority hath been ſo much queſtioned, denied, and proudly oppoſed? That thoſe very perſons, who have thus denied and oppoſed the authority of God, ſhould be themſelves, with the reſt of the world, brought before the tribunal of God? That however God be not now viſibly preſent upon earth, diſpoſing and judging in that viſible manner that earthly kings do; yet at the concluſion of the world

world he ſhould make his dominion viſible to all, and with reſpect to all mankind, ſo that every eye ſhall ſee him, and even they who have denied him, ſhall find, that God is the ſupreme Lord of them, and of the whole world?

2. The end of judgement will be more fully anſwered by a public and general, than only by a particular and private judgement. The end for which there is any judgement at all is to diſplay and glorify the righteouſneſs of God; which end is more fully accompliſhed by calling men to an account, bringing their actions to the trial, and determining their ſtate according to them, the whole world, both angels and men, being preſent to behold, than if the ſame things ſhould be done in a more private way. At the day of judgement there will be the moſt glorious diſplay of the juſtice of God that ever was made. Then God will appear to be entirely righteous towards every one; the juſtice of all, his moral government will on that day be at once diſcovered. Then all objections will be removed; the conſcience of every man ſhall be ſatisfied; the blaſphemies of the ungodly will be for ever put to ſilence, and argument will be given for the ſaints and angels to praiſe God for ever: Rev. xix. 1. 2. "And after theſe things I heard a great voice "of much people in heaven, ſaying, Alleluia; Salvation, and "glory, and honour, and power be to the Lord our God: "for true and righteous are his judgements."

3. It is very agreeable to reaſon, that the irregularities which are ſo open and manifeſt in the world, ſhould, when the world comes to an end, be publicly rectified by the ſupreme governor. The infinitely wiſe God, who made this world to be an habitation for men, and placed mankind to dwell here, and hath appointed man his end and work, muſt take care of the order and good government of the world, which he hath thus made. He is not regardleſs how things proceed here on earth: it would be a reproach to his wiſdom, and to the perfect rectitude of his nature, to ſuppoſe ſo. This world is a world of confuſion; it hath been filled with irregularity and confuſion ever ſince the fall; and the irregularities of it are not only private, relating to the actions of particular perſons; but ſtates, kingdoms, nations, churches, cities, and all ſocieties of men in all ages, have been full of public irregularities. The affairs of the world, ſo far as they are in the hands of men, are carried on in the moſt irregular and confuſed manner.

Though juſtice ſometimes takes place, yet how often do injuſtice, cruelty, and oppreſſion prevail! How often are the

the righteous condemned, and the wicked acquitted and rewarded! How common is it for the virtuous and pious to be depreſſed, and the wicked to be advanced! How many thouſands of the beſt of men have ſuffered intolerable cruelties, merely for their virtue and piety, and in this world have had no help, no refuge to fly to! The world is very much ruled by the pride, covetouſneſs, and paſſions of men. Solomon takes much notice of ſuch like irregularities in the preſent ſtate of mankind, in his book of Eccleſiaſtes, whereby he ſhows the vanity of the world.

Now, how reaſonable is it to ſuppoſe, that God, when he ſhall come to put an end to the preſent ſtate of mankind, will in an open, public manner, the whole world being preſent, rectify all theſe diſorders! and that he will bring all things to a trial by a general judgement, in order that thoſe who have been oppreſſed may be delivered; that the righteous cauſe may be pleaded and vindicated, and wickedneſs, which hath been approved, honoured, and rewarded, may receive its due diſgrace and puniſhment; that the proceedings of kings and earthly judges may be inquired into by him, whoſe eyes are as a flame of fire; and that the public actions of men may be publicly examined and recompenſed according to their deſert! How agreeable is it to divine wiſdom thus to order things, and how worthy of the ſupreme governor of the world!

4. By a public and general judgement, God more fully accompliſhes the reward he deſigns for the godly, and the puniſhment he deſigns for the wicked. One part of the reward which God intends for his ſaints, is the honour which he intends to beſtow upon them. He will honour them in the moſt public and open manner, before the angels, before all mankind, and before them that hated them. And it is moſt ſuitable that it ſhould be ſo: it is ſuitable that thoſe holy, humble ſouls, that have been hated by wicked men, have been cruelly treated and put to ſhame by them, and who have been haughtily domineered over, ſhould be openly acquitted, commended, and crowned, before all the world.

So one part of the puniſhment of the ungodly will be the open ſhame and diſgrace which they ſhall ſuffer. Altho' many of them have proudly lifted up their heads in this world, have had a very high thought of themſelves, and have obtained outward honour among men; yet God will put them to open ſhame, by ſhowing all their wickedneſs and moral filthineſs before the whole aſſembly of angels and

and men; by manifeſting his abhorrence of them, in placing them upon his left hand, among devils and foul ſpirits; and by turning them away into the moſt loathſome, as well as moſt dreadful pit of hell, to dwell there for ever.

Theſe ends may be much more fully accompliſhed in a general, than in a particular judgement.

SER.

SERMON XIV.

The World judged righteouſly by Jeſus Chriſt.

ACTS, xvii. 31.

Becauſe he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained.

WE come now to ſhow,

III. That the perſon by whom God will judge the world, is Jeſus Chriſt, God-man. The ſecond perſon in the Trinity, that ſame perſon of whom we read in our Bibles, who was born of the Virgin Mary, lived in Galilee and Judea, and was at laſt crucified without the gates of Jeruſalem, will come to judge the world both in his divine and human nature, in the ſame human body that was crucified, and roſe again, and aſcended up into heaven: Acts i. 11. "This ſame "Jeſus that is taken up from you into heaven, ſhall come in "like manner, as ye have ſeen him go into heaven." It will be his human nature which will then be ſeen by the bodily eyes of men. However his divine nature, which is united to the human, will then alſo be preſent: and it will be by the wiſdom of that divine nature that Chriſt will ſee and judge.

Here naturally ariſes an enquiry, Why is Chriſt appointed to judge the world rather than the Father or the Holy Ghoſt? We cannot pretend to know all the reaſons of the divine diſpenſations. God is not obliged to give us an account of them. But ſo much we may learn by divine revelation, as to diſcover marvellous wiſdom in what he determines and orders with reſpect to this matter. We learn,

1. That God ſeeth fit, that that perſon who is in the human nature, ſhould be the judge of thoſe who are of the human nature: John v. 27. "And hath given him authority to execute "judgement alſo, *becauſe he is the Son of man.*" Seeing there is one of the perſons of the Trinity united to the human nature, God chuſes, in all his tranſactions with mankind, to tranſact by him. He did ſo of old, in his diſcoveries of himſelf to the patriarchs, in giving the law, in leading the children of Iſrael through the wilderneſs, and in the manifeſtations he made of himſelf in the tabernacle and temple: when, although Chriſt was not actually incarnate, yet he was ſo in deſign, it was ordained and agreed in the covenant of redemption, that he ſhould become incarnate. And ſince the incarnation of Chriſt, God governs both the church and the world by Chriſt. So he will alſo at the end judge the world by him. All men ſhall be judged by God, and yet at the ſame time by one inveſted with their own nature.

God ſeeth fit, that thoſe who have bodies, as all mankind will have at the day of judgement, ſhould ſee their judge with their bodily eyes, and hear him with their bodily ears. If one of the other perſons of the Trinity had been appointed to be judge, there muſt have been ſome extraordinary outward appearance made on purpoſe to be a token of the divine preſence, as it was of old, before Chriſt was incarnate. But now there is no neceſſity of that: now one of the perſons of the Trinity is actually incarnate, ſo that God by him may appear to bodily eyes without any miraculous viſionary appearance.

2. Chriſt hath this honour of being the judge of the world given him, as a ſuitable reward for his ſufferings. This is a part of Chriſt's exaltation. The exaltation of Chriſt is given him in reward for his humiliation and ſufferings. This was ſtipulated in the covenant of redemption; and we are expreſsly told, it was given him in reward for his ſufferings, Phil. ii. 8.—12. "And being found in faſhion "as a man, he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto "death, even the death of the croſs. Wherefore God alſo "hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is "above every name: that at the name of Jeſus every knee "ſhould bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and "things under the earth; and that every tongue ſhould "confeſs, that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord, to the glory of God "the Father."

God

God ſeeth meet, that he who appeared in ſuch a low eſtate amongſt mankind, without form or comelineſs, having his divine glory vailed, ſhould appear amongſt men a ſecond time, in his own proper majeſty and glory, without a vail; to the end that thoſe who ſaw him here at the firſt, as a poor, frail man, not having where to lay his head, ſubject to much hardſhip and affliction, may ſee him the ſecond time in power and great glory, inveſted with the glory and dignity of the abſolute Lord of heaven and earth; and that he who once tabernacled with men, and was deſpiſed and rejected of them, may have the honour of arraigning all men before his throne, and judging them with reſpect to their eternal ſtate: John v. 21.—24.

God ſeeth meet that he who was once arraigned before the judgement-ſeat of men, and was there moſt vilely treated, being mocked, ſpitted on, and condemned, and who was at laſt crucified, ſhould be rewarded, by having thoſe very perſons brought to his tribunal, that they may ſee him in glory, and be confounded; and that he may have the diſpoſal of them for all eternity; as Chriſt ſaid to the high prieſt while arraigned before him, Matth. xxvi. 64. "Here-" after ye ſhall ſee the Son of man ſitting on the right hand " of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

3. It is needful that Chriſt ſhould be the judge of the world, in order that he may finiſh the work of redemption. It is the will of God, that he who is the Redeemer of the world ſhould be a complete Redeemer; and that therefore he ſhould have the whole work of redemption left in his hands. Now, the redemption of fallen man conſiſts not merely in the impetration of redemption, by obeying the divine law, and making atonement for ſinners, or in preparing the way for their ſalvation, but it in a great meaſure conſiſts, and is actually fulfilled, in converting ſinners to the knowledge and love of the truth, in carrying them on in the way of grace and true holineſs through life, and in finally raiſing their bodies to life, in glorifying them, in pronouncing the bleſſed ſentence upon them, in crowning them with honour and glory in the ſight of men and angels, and in completing and perfecting their reward. Now, it is neceſſary that Chriſt ſhould do this, in order to his finiſhing the work which he hath begun. Raiſing the ſaints from the dead, judging them, and fulfilling the ſentence, is part of their ſalvation; and therefore it was neceſſary that Chriſt ſhould be appointed judge of the world, in order that he might finiſh his work, John vi. 39. 40.; chap. v. 25.—31.

The redemption of the bodies of the ſaints is part of the work of redemption; the reſurrection to life is called a redemption of their bodies, Rom. viii. 23.

It is the will of God, that Chriſt himſelf ſhould have the fulfilling of that for which he died, and for which he ſuffered ſo much. Now, the end for which he ſuffered and died was the complete ſalvation of his people; and this ſhall be obtained at the laſt judgement, and not before. Therefore it was neceſſary that Chriſt be appointed judge, in order that he himſelf might fully accompliſh the end for which he had both ſuffered and died. When Chriſt had finiſhed his appointed ſufferings, God did, as it were, put the purchaſed inheritance into his hands, to be kept for believers, and be beſtowed upon them at the day of judgement.

4. It was proper that he who is appointed King of the church ſhould rule till he ſhould have put all his enemies under his feet; in order to which, he muſt be the judge of his enemies, as well as of his people. One of the offices of Chriſt, as Redeemer, is that of a King; he is appointed King of the church, and head over all things to the church; and in order that his kingdom be complete, and the deſign of his reign be accompliſhed, he muſt conquer all his enemies, and then he will deliver up the kingdom to the Father: 1 Cor. xv. 24. 25. "Then cometh the end, when he "ſhall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the "Father; when he ſhall have put down all rule, and all "authority and power. For he muſt reign till he hath put "all enemies under his feet." Now, when Chriſt ſhall have brought his enemies, who had denied, oppoſed, and rebelled againſt him, to his judgement-ſeat, and ſhall have paſſed and executed ſentence upon them, this will be a final and complete victory over them, a victory which ſhall put an end to the war. And it is proper that he who at preſent reigns, and is carrying on the war againſt thoſe who are of the oppoſite kingdom, ſhould have the honour of obtaining the victory, and finiſhing the war.

5. It is for the abundant comfort of the ſaints that Chriſt is appointed to be their judge. The covenant of grace, with all its circumſtances, and all thoſe events to which it hath relation, is every way ſo contrived of God, as to give ſtrong conſolation to believers: for God deſigned the goſpel for a glorious manifeſtation of his grace to them; and therefore every thing in it is ſo ordered as to manifeſt the moſt grace and mercy.

Now,

Now, it is for the abundant conſolation of the ſaints, that their own Redeemer is appointed to be their judge; that the ſame perſon who ſpilled his blood for them hath the determination of their ſtate left with him; ſo that they need not doubt but that they ſhall have what he was at ſo much coſt to procure.

What matter of joy to them will it be at the laſt day, to lift up their eyes, and behold the perſon in whom they have truſted for ſalvation, to whom they have fled for refuge, upon whom they have built as their foundation for eternity, and whoſe voice they have often heard, inviting them to himſelf for protection and ſafety, coming to judge them.

6. That Chriſt is appointed to be the judge of the world, will be for the more abundant conviction of the ungodly. It will be for their conviction, that they are judged and condemned by that very perſon whom they have rejected, by whom they might have been ſaved, who ſhed his blood to give them an opportunity to be ſaved, who was wont to offer his righteouſneſs to them, when they were in their ſtate of trial, and who many a time called and invited them to come to him, that they might be ſaved. How juſtly will they be condemned by him whoſe ſalvation they have rejected, whoſe blood they have deſpiſed, whoſe many calls they have refuſed, and whom they have pierced by their ſins!

How much will it be for their conviction, when they ſhall hear the ſentence of condemnation pronounced, to reflect with themſelves, how often hath this ſame perſon, who now paſſes ſentence of condemnation upon me, called me, in his word, and by his meſſengers, to accept of him, and to give myſelf to him? How often hath he knocked at the door of my heart! and had it not been for my own folly and obſtinacy, how might I have had him for my Saviour, who is now my incenſed judge!

IV. I ſhall give ſome account of the tranſactions of the day of judgement.

1. Chriſt Jeſus will, in a moſt magnificent manner, deſcend from heaven with all the holy angels. The man Chriſt Jeſus is now in the heaven of heavens, or, as the apoſtle expreſſes it, "far above all heavens," Eph. iv. 10. And there he hath been ever ſince his aſcenſion, being there enthroned in glory, in the midſt of millions of angels and bleſſed ſpirits. But when the time appointed for the day of judgement

judgement ſhall have come, notice of it will be given in thoſe happy regions, and Chriſt will deſcend to the earth, attended with all thoſe heavenly hoſts, in a moſt ſolemn, awful, and glorious manner. Chriſt will come with divine majeſty, he will come in the glory of the Father, Matth. xvi. 27. "For the Son of man ſhall come in the glory of his Father, "with his angels."

We can now conceive but little of the holy and awful magnificence in which Chriſt will appear, as he ſhall come in the clouds of heaven, or of the glory of his retinue. How mean and deſpicable, in compariſon with it, is the moſt ſplendid appearance that earthly princes can make! A glorious viſible light will ſhine round about him, and the earth, with all nature, will tremble at his preſence. How vaſt and innumerable will that hoſt be which will appear with him! Heaven will be for the time deſerted of its inhabitants.

We may argue the glory of Chriſt's appearance, from his appearance at other times. When he appeared in tranſfiguration, his face did ſhine as the ſun, and his raiment was white as the light. The Apoſtle Peter long after ſpake of this appearance in magnificent terms, 2 Pet. i. 16. 17. "We were eye-witneſſes of his majeſty; for he received "from God the Father honour and glory, when there came "ſuch a voice to him from the excellent glory." And his appearance to St Paul at his converſion, and to St John, as related in Rev. i. 13. &c. were very grand and magnificent. But we may conclude, that his appearance at the day of judgement will be vaſtly more ſo than either of theſe, as the occaſion will be ſo much greater. We have good reaſon to think, that our nature, in the preſent frail ſtate, could not bear the appearance of the majeſty in which he will then be ſeen.

We may argue the glory of his appearance, from the appearances of ſome of the angels to men; as of the angel that appeared at Chriſt's ſepulchre, after his reſurrection, Matth. xxviii. 3. "His countenance was like lightning, and "his raiment white as ſnow." The angels will doubtleſs all of them make as glorious an appearance at the day of judgement, as ever any of them have made on former occaſions. How glorious, then, will be the retinue of Chriſt, made up of ſo many thouſands of ſuch angels! and how much more glorious will Chriſt, the judge himſelf, appear, than thoſe his attendants! Doubtleſs their God will appear immenſely more glorious than they.

Chriſt

Chriſt will thus deſcend into our air, to ſuch a diſtance from the ſurface of the earth, that every one, when all ſhall be gathered together, ſhall ſee him, Rev. i. 7. "Be- "hold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye ſhall ſee "him."

Chriſt will make this appearance ſuddenly, and to the great ſurpriſe of the inhabitants of the earth. It is therefore compared to a cry at midnight, by which men are wakened in a great ſurpriſe.

2. At the ſound of the laſt trumpet, the dead ſhall riſe, and the living ſhall be changed. As ſoon as Chriſt is deſcended, the laſt trumpet ſhall ſound, as a notification to all mankind to appear; at which mighty ſound ſhall the dead be immediately raiſed, and the living changed: 1 Cor. xv. 52. "For the trumpet ſhall ſound, and the dead ſhall be "raiſed incorruptible, and we ſhall be changed;" Matth. xxiv. 31. "And he ſhall ſend his angels with a great ſound "of a trumpet;" 1 Theſſ. iv. 16. "For the Lord himſelf "ſhall deſcend from heaven with a ſhout, with the voice "of the archangel, and with the trump of God." There will be ſome great and remarkable ſignal given for the riſing of the dead, which it ſeems will be ſome mighty ſound, cauſed by the angels of God, who ſhall attend on Chriſt.

Upon this all the dead ſhall riſe from their graves; all, both ſmall and great, who ſhall ever have lived upon earth ſince the foundation of the world; thoſe who died before the flood, and thoſe who were drowned in the flood, all that have died ſince that time, and that ſhall die to the end of the world. There will be a great moving upon the face of the earth, and in the waters, in bringing bone to his bone, in opening graves, and bringing together all the ſcattered particles of dead bodies. The earth ſhall give up the dead that are in it, and the ſea ſhall give up the dead that are in it.

However the parts of the bodies of many are divided and ſcattered; however many have been burnt, and their bodies have been turned to aſhes and ſmoke, and driven to the four winds; however many have been eaten of wild beaſts, of the fowls of heaven, and the fiſhes of the ſea; however many have conſumed away upon the face of the earth, and great part of their bodies have aſcended in exhalations; yet the all-wiſe and all-powerful God can immediately bring every part to his part again.

Of this vaſt multitude ſome ſhall riſe to life, and others

to

to condemnation. John v. 28. 29. "All that are in the graves "ſhall hear his voice, and ſhall come forth, they that have "done good, unto the reſurrection of life; and they that "have done evil, unto the reſurrection of damnation."

When the bodies are prepared, the departed ſouls ſhall again enter into their bodies, and be reunited to them, never more to be ſeparated. The ſouls of the wicked ſhall be brought up out of hell, though not out of miſery, and ſhall very unwillingly enter into their bodies, which will be but eternal priſons to them. Rev. xx. 13. "And death "and hell delivered up the dead that were in them." They ſhall lift their eyes full of the utmoſt amazement and horror to ſee their awful judge. And perhaps the bodies with which they ſhall be raiſed will be moſt filthy and loathſome, thus properly correſponding to the inward, moral turpitude of their ſouls.

The ſouls of the righteous ſhall deſcend from heaven together with Chriſt and the angels: 1 Theſſ. iv. 14. "Them "alſo which ſleep in Jeſus, will God bring with him." They alſo ſhall be reunited to their bodies, that they may be glorified with them. They ſhall receive their bodies prepared by God to be manſions of pleaſure to all eternity. They ſhall be every way fitted for the uſes, the exerciſes, and delights of perfectly holy and glorified ſouls. They ſhall be clothed with a ſuperlative beauty, ſimilar to that of Chriſt's glorious body: Phil. iii. 21. "Who ſhall change "our vile body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glo-"rious body." Their bodies ſhall riſe incorruptible, no more liable to pain or diſeaſe, and with an extraordinary vigour and vivacity, like that of thoſe ſpirits that are as a flame of fire. 1 Cor. xv. 43. 44. "It is ſown in diſhonour, it "is raiſed in glory: it is ſown in weakneſs, it is raiſed in "power; it is ſown a natural body, it is raiſed a ſpiritual bo-"dy." With what joy will the ſouls and bodies of the ſaints meet, and with what joy will they lift up their heads out of their graves to behold the glorious ſight of the appearing of Chriſt! And it will be a glorious ſight to ſee thoſe ſaints ariſing out of their graves, putting off their corruption, and putting on incorruption and glory.

At the ſame time, thoſe that ſhall then be alive upon the earth ſhall be changed. Their bodies ſhall paſs through a great change, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; 1 Cor. xv. 51. 52. "Behold, I ſhow you a great myſtery; We "ſhall not all ſleep, but we ſhall all be changed, in a moment, "in the twinkling of an eye, at the laſt trump." The bodies

of

of the wicked then living will be changed into ſuch hideous things, as ſhall be anſwerable to the loathſome ſouls that dwell in them, and ſuch as ſhall be prepared to receive and adminiſter eternal torments without diſſolution. But the bodies of the righteous ſhall be changed into the ſame glorious and immortal form in which thoſe that ſhall be raiſed will appear.

3. They ſhall all be brought to appear before Chriſt, the godly being placed on the right hand, the wicked on the left; Matth. xxv. 31. 32. 33. The wicked, however unwilling, however full of fear and horror, ſhall be brought or driven before the judgement-ſeat. However they may try to hide themſelves, and for this purpoſe creep into dens and caves of the mountains, and cry to the mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the face of him that ſitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; yet there ſhall not one eſcape; to the Judge they muſt come, and ſtand on the left hand with devils. On the contrary, the righteous will be joyfully conducted to Jeſus Chriſt, probably by the angels. Their joy will, as it were, give them wings to carry them thither. They will with ecſtacies and raptures of delight meet their friend and Saviour, come into his preſence, and ſtand at his right hand.

Beſides the one ſtanding on the right hand and the other on the left, there ſeems to be this difference between them, that when the dead in Chriſt ſhall be raiſed, they will all be caught up into the air, where Chriſt ſhall be, and ſhall be there at his right hand during the judgement, never more to ſet their feet on this earth. Whereas the wicked ſhall be left ſtanding on the earth, there to abide the judgement. 1 Theſſ. iv. 16. 17. "The dead in Chriſt ſhall riſe firſt; then "we which are alive and remain, ſhall be caught up together "with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and "ſo ſhall we ever be with the Lord."

And what a vaſt congregation will there be of all the men, women, and children that ſhall have lived upon earth from the beginning to the end of the world! Rev. xx. 12. "And I ſaw the dead, ſmall and great, ſtand before God."

SERMON XV.

The World judged righteouſly by Jeſus Chriſt.

ACTS, xvii. 31.

Becauſe he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained.

WE were laſt giving ſome account of the events and tranſactions of the day of judgement. We have already ſpoken of theſe under three particulars, and now proceed to obſerve,

4. The next thing will be, that the books ſhall be opened: Rev. xx. 12. "I ſaw the dead, ſmall and great, ſtand be- "fore God; and *the books were opened.*" Which books ſeem to be theſe two, the book of God's remembrance, and the book of ſcripture; the former as the evidence of their deeds which are to be judged, the latter as the rule of judgement. The works both of the righteous and of the wicked will be brought forth, that they may be judged according to them, and thoſe works will be tried according to the appointed and written rule.

(1.) The works of both righteous and wicked will be rehearſed. The book of God's remembrance will be firſt opened. The various works of the children of men are, as it were, written by God in a book of remembrance, Mal. iii. 16. "A book of remembrance was written before him." However ready ungodly men may be to make light of their own ſins, and to forget them; yet God never forgetteth any of them: neither doth God forget any of the good works of the ſaints. If they give but a cup of cold water with a ſpirit of charity, God remembers it.

The evil works of the wicked ſhall then be brought forth to light. They muſt then hear of all their profaneneſs, their

their impenitence, their obſtinate unbelief, their abuſe of ordinances, and various other ſins. The various aggravations of their ſins will alſo be brought to view, as how this man ſinned after ſuch and ſuch warnings, that after the receipt of ſuch and ſuch mercies; one after being ſo and ſo favoured with outward light, another after having been the ſubject of inward conviction, excited by the immediate agency of God. Concerning theſe ſins, they ſhall be called to account, to ſee what anſwer they can make for themſelves: Matth. xii. 36. "But I ſay unto you, that every idle "word that men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give account there-"of in the day of judgement." Rom. xiv. 12. "So then "every one of us ſhall give account of himſelf to God."

The good works of the ſaints will alſo be brought forth as evidences of their ſincerity, and of their intereſt in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt. As to their evil works, they will not be brought forth againſt them on that day; for the guilt of them will not lie upon them, they being clothed with the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt. The judge himſelf will have taken the guilt of their ſins upon him; therefore their ſins will not ſtand againſt them in the book of God's remembrance. The account of them will appear to have been cancelled before that time. The account that will be found in God's book will not be of debt, but of credit. God cancels their debts, and ſets down their good works, and is pleaſed, as it were, to make himſelf a debtor for them, by his own gracious act.

Both good and bad will be judged according to their works: Rev. xx. 12. "And the dead were judged out of "thoſe things that were found written in the books, *ac-*"*cording to their works*;" and verſ. 13. "And they were "judged every man according to their works." Though the righteous are juſtified by faith, and not by their works; yet they ſhall be judged *according to* their works: their works ſhall be brought forth as the evidence of their faith. Their faith on that great day ſhall be tried by its fruits. If the works of any man ſhall have been bad, if his life ſhall appear to have been unchriſtian, that will condemn him, without any further inquiry. But if his works, when they ſhall be examined, prove good and of the right ſort, he ſhall ſurely be juſtified. They will be declared as a ſure evidence of his having believed in Jeſus Chriſt, and of his being clothed with his righteouſneſs.

But by works we are to underſtand all voluntary exerciſes of the faculties of the ſoul; as for inſtance, the words

and converſation of men, as well as what is done with their hands: Matth. xii. "By thy words thou ſhalt be juſti-"fied, and by thy words thou ſhall be condemned." Nor are we to underſtand only outward acts, or the thoughts outwardly expreſſed, but alſo the thoughts themſelves, and all the inward workings of the heart. Man judgeth according to the outward appearance, but God judgeth the heart: Rev. ii. 23. "I am he that ſearcheth the heart and "the reins, and I will give unto every one of you accor-"ding to his works." Nor will only poſitive ſins be brought into judgement, but alſo omiſſions of duty, as is manifeſt by Matth. xxv. 42. &c. "For I was an hungred, "and ye gave me no meat; I was thirſty, and ye gave me "no drink," &c.

On that day ſecret and hidden wickedneſs will be brought to light. All the uncleanneſs, injuſtice, and violence, of which men have been guilty in ſecret, ſhall be manifeſt both to angels and men. Then it will be made to appear, how this and that man have indulged themſelves in wicked imaginations, in laſcivious, covetous, malicious, or impious deſires and wiſhes; and how others have harboured in their hearts enmity againſt God and his law; alſo impenitency and unbelief, notwithſtanding all the means uſed with them, and motives ſet before them, to induce them to repent, return, and live.

The good works of the ſaints alſo, which were done in ſecret, ſhall then be made public, and even the pious and benevolent affections and deſigns of their hearts; ſo that the real and ſecret characters of both ſaints and ſinners ſhall then be moſt clearly and publicly diſplayed.

2. The book of ſcripture will be opened, and the works of men will be tried by that touchſtone. Their works will be compared with the word of God. That which God gave men for the rule of their action while in this life, ſhall then be made the rule of their judgement. God hath told us beforehand, what will be the rule of judgement. We are told in the ſcriptures, upon what terms we ſhall be juſtified, and upon what terms we ſhall be condemned. That which God hath given us to be our rule in our lives, he will make his own rule in judgement.

The rule of judgement will be twofold. The *primary* rule of judgement will be the law. The law ever hath ſtood, and ever will ſtand in force, as a rule of judgement, for thoſe to whom the law was given: Matth. v. 18. "For "verily I ſay unto you, Till heaven and earth paſs, one "jot or one tittle ſhall in no wiſe paſs from the law, till all

"be

" be fulfilled." The law will ſo far be made the rule of judgement, that not one perſon at that day ſhall by any means be juſtified or condemned, in a way inconſiſtent with that which is eſtabliſhed by the law. As to the wicked, the law will be ſo far the rule of judgement reſpecting them, that the ſentence denounced againſt them will be the ſentence of the law. The righteous will be ſo far judged by the law, that although their ſentence will not be the ſentence of the law, yet it will by no means be ſuch a ſentence as ſhall be inconſiſtent with the law, but ſuch as it allows: for it will be by the righteouſneſs of the law that they ſhall be juſtified.

It will be inquired concerning every one, both righteous and wicked, whether the law ſtands againſt him, or whether he hath a fulfilment of the law to ſhow. As to the righteous, they will have a fulfilment to ſhow; they will have it to plead, that the judge himſelf hath fulfilled the law for them; that he hath both ſatisfied for their ſins, and fulfilled the righteouſneſs of the law for them: Rom. x. 4. " Chriſt is the end of the law for righteouſneſs to every " one that believeth." But as to the wicked, when it ſhall be found, by the book of God's remembrance, that they have broken the law, and have no fulfilment of it to plead, the ſentence of the law ſhall be pronounced upon them.

A *ſecondary* rule of judgement will be the goſpel, or the covenant of grace, wherein it is ſaid, " He that believeth " ſhall be ſaved, and he that believeth not ſhall be damn- " ed:" Rom. ii. 16. " In the day when God ſhall judge " the ſecrets of men by Jeſus Chriſt, according to my go- " ſpel." By the goſpel, or covenant of grace, eternal bleſſedneſs will be adjudged to believers. When it ſhall be found that the law hinders not, that the curſe and condemnation of the law ſtands not againſt them, the reward of eternal life ſhall be given them, according to the glorious goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt.

5. The ſentence will be pronounced. Chriſt will ſay to the wicked on the left hand, " Depart, ye curſed, into " everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." How dreadful will theſe words of the judge be to the poor, miſerable, deſpairing wretches on the left hand! How amazing will every ſyllable of them be! How will they pierce them to the ſoul! Theſe words ſhow the greateſt wrath and abhorrence. Chriſt will bid them *depart*; he will ſend them away from his preſence, will remove them for ever far out of his ſight, into an everlaſting ſeparation from God,

God, as being moſt loathſome, and unfit to dwell in his preſence, and enjoy communion with him.

Chriſt will call them *curſed; Depart, ye curſed,* to whom everlaſting wrath and ruin belong; who are by your own wickedneſs prepared for nothing elſe, but to be firebrands of hell; who are the fit objects and veſſels of the vengeance and fury of the Almighty. *Into fire;* he will not ſend them away merely into a loathſome priſon, the receptacle of the filth and rubbiſh of the univerſe; but into a furnace of fire; that muſt be their dwelling-place, there they muſt be tormented with the moſt racking pain and anguiſh. It is *everlaſting* fire; there is eternity in the ſentence, which infinitely aggravates the doom, and will make every word of it immenſely more dreadful, ſinking and amazing to the ſouls that receive it. *Prepared for the devil and his angels*; this ſets forth the greatneſs and intenſeneſs of the torments, as the preceding part of the ſentence does the duration. It ſhows the dreadfulneſs of that fire to which they ſhall be condemned, that it is the ſame that is prepared for the devils, thoſe foul ſpirits and great enemies of God. Their condition will be the ſame as that of the devils, in many reſpects; particularly as they muſt burn in the ſame fire for ever.

This ſentence will doubtleſs be pronounced in ſuch an awful manner as ſhall be a terrible manifeſtation of the wrath of the judge. There will be divine, holy, and almighty wrath manifeſted in the countenance and voice of the judge; and we now know not what other manifeſtations of anger will accompany the ſentence. Perhaps it will be accompanied with thunders and lightnings far more dreadful than were on mount Sinai at the giving of the law. Correſpondent to theſe exhibitions of divine wrath, will be the appearances of terror and moſt horrible amazement in the condemned. How will all their faces look pale! how will death ſit upon their countenances, when thoſe words ſhall be heard! What dolorous cries, ſhrieks, and groans! What trembling, and wringing of hands, and chattering of teeth, and tearing of hair, will there then be!

But with the moſt benign aſpect, in the moſt endearing manner, and with the ſweeteſt expreſſions of love, will Chriſt invite his ſaints on his right hand to glory; ſaying, "Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom pre-"pared for you from the foundation of the world." He will not bid them to go from him, but *to come with him;* to go where he goes; to dwell where he dwells; to enjoy him,

him, and to partake with him. He will call them *bleſſed*, and bleſſed of *his Father*, bleſſed by him whoſe bleſſing is infinitely the moſt deſirable, namely GOD. *Inherit the kingdom:* they are not only invited to go with Chriſt, and to dwell with him, but to inherit a kingdom with him; to ſit down with him on his throne, and to receive the honour and happineſs of an heavenly kingdom. *Prepared for you from the foundation of the world;* this denotes the ſovereign and eternal love of God, as the ſource of their bleſſedneſs. He puts them in mind, that God was pleaſed to ſet his love upon them, long before they had a being, even from eternity; that therefore God made heaven on purpoſe for them, and fitted it for their delight and happineſs.

6. Immediately after this the ſentence will be executed, as we are informed, Matth. xxv. 46. "Theſe ſhall go away "into everlaſting puniſhment; but the righteous into life "eternal." When the words of the ſentence ſhall have once proceeded out of the mouth of the judge, then that vaſt and innumerable throng of ungodly men ſhall go away, ſhall be driven away, ſhall be neceſſitated to go away with devils, and ſhall with diſmal cries and ſhrieks be caſt into the great furnace of fire prepared for the puniſhment of devils, the perpetual thunders and lightnings of the wrath of God following them. Into this furnace they muſt in both ſoul and body enter, never more to come out. Here they muſt ſpend eternal ages in wreſtling with the moſt excruciating torments, and in crying out in the midſt of the moſt dreadful flames, and under the moſt inſupportable wrath.

On the other hand, the righteous ſhall aſcend to heaven with their glorified bodies, in company with Chriſt, his angels, and all that hoſt which deſcended with him: they ſhall aſcend in the moſt joyful and triumphant manner, and ſhall enter with Chriſt into that glorious and bleſſed world, which had for the time been empty of its creature-inhabitants. Chriſt having given his church that perfect beauty, and crowned it with that glory, honour, and happineſs, which were ſtipulated in the covenant of redemption, before the world was, and which he died to procure for them, and having made it a truly glorious church, every way complete; will preſent it before the Father, without ſpot, or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing. Thus ſhall the ſaints be inſtated in everlaſting glory, to dwell there with Chriſt, who ſhall feed them and lead them to living fountains of water, to the full enjoyment of God, and to an eternity of the moſt holy,

holy, glorious, and joyful employments.——I come now, as was originally propoſed, to ſhow,

V. That all this will be done in righteouſneſs. He will give to every man his due, according to a moſt righteous rule. Thoſe who ſhall be condemned, will be moſt juſtly condemned; will be condemned to that puniſhment which they ſhall moſt juſtly deſerve; and the juſtice of God in condemning them will be made moſt evident. Now the juſtice of God in puniſhing wicked men, and eſpecially in the degree of their puniſhment, is often blaſphemouſly called in queſtion. But it will be made clear and apparent to all; their own conſciences will tell them that the ſentence is juſt, and all cavils will be put to ſilence.

So thoſe that ſhall be juſtified, ſhall be moſt juſtly adjudged to eternal life. Although they alſo were great ſinners, and deſerved eternal death; yet it will not be againſt juſtice or the law, to juſtify them, they will be in Chriſt. But the acquitting of them will be but giving the reward merited by Chriſt's righteouſneſs, Rom. iii. 26. "That God may be "juſt, and the juſtifier of him that believeth in Jeſus."

Chriſt will judge the world in righteouſneſs, particularly as he will give to every one a *due proportion* either of reward or puniſhment, according to the various characters of thoſe who ſhall be judged. The puniſhments ſhall be duly proportioned to the number and aggravations of the ſins of the wicked; and the rewards of the righteous ſhall be duly proportioned to the number of their holy acts and affections, and alſo to the degree of virtue implied in them.—I would obſerve further,

1. That Chriſt cannot fail of being juſt in judging, thro' *miſtake*. He cannot take ſome to be ſincere and godly, who are not ſo, nor others to be hypocrites, who are really ſincere. His eyes are as a flame of fire, and he ſearcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men. He can never err in determining what is juſtice in particular caſes, as human judges often do. Nor can he be blinded by prejudice, as human judges are very liable to be. Deut. x. 17. "He regardeth not perſons, nor taketh reward." It is impoſſible he ſhould be deceived by the excuſes, and falſe colours, and pleas of the wicked, as human judges very commonly are. It is equally impoſſible that he ſhould err, in aſſigning to every one his proper proportion of reward or puniſhment, according to his wickedneſs or good works.

His

His knowledge being infinite, will effectually guard him againſt all theſe, and other ſuch errors.

2. He cannot fail of judging righteouſly through an unrighteous diſpoſition; for he is infinitely juſt and holy in his nature. Deut. xxxii. 4. "He is the rock, his work is "perfect: for all his ways are judgement: a God of truth, "and without iniquity, juſt and right is he." It is not poſſible that an infinitely powerful, ſelf-ſufficient being ſhould be under any temptation to injuſtice. Nor is it poſſible that an infinitely wiſe being, who knoweth all things, ſhould not chuſe juſtice. For he who perfectly knows all things, perfectly knows how much more amiable juſtice is than injuſtice; and therefore muſt chuſe it.

VI. The *ſixth* and laſt thing under the doctrine is, to conſider thoſe things which will immediately follow the day of judgement.

1. After the ſentence ſhall have been pronounced, and the ſaints ſhall have aſcended with Chriſt into glory, this world will be diſſolved by fire: the conflagration will immediately ſucceed the judgement. When an end ſhall have been put to the preſent ſtate of mankind, this world, which was the place of their habitation during that ſtate, will be deſtroyed, there being no further uſe for it. This earth which had been the ſtage upon which ſo many ſcenes had been acted, upon which there had been ſo many great and famous kingdoms and large cities; where there had been ſo many wars, ſo much trade and buſineſs carried on for ſo many ages; ſhall then be deſtroyed. Theſe continents, theſe iſlands, theſe ſeas and rivers, theſe mountains and vallies, ſhall be ſeen no more at all: all ſhall be deſtroyed by devouring flames. This we are plainly taught in the word of God. 2 Pet. iii. 7. "But the heavens and the "earth which are now, by the ſame word are kept in ſtore, "reſerved unto fire againſt the day of judgement, and "perdition of ungodly men." v. 10. "But the day of the "Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the "heavens ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, and the ele"ments ſhall melt with fervent heat, the earth alſo and "the works that are therein ſhall be burnt up." v. 12. "Looking for and haſting unto the coming of the day of "God, wherein the heavens being on fire ſhall be diſſol"ved, and the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat."

2. Both the miſery of the wicked and the happineſs of the ſaints will be increaſed, beyond what it ſhall be before the

judgement. The miſery of the wicked will be increaſed, as they will be tormented not only in their ſouls, but alſo in their bodies, which will be prepared both to receive and adminiſter torment to their ſouls. There will doubtleſs then be the like connexion between ſoul and body, as there is now; and therefore the pains and torments of the one will affect the other. And why may we not ſuppoſe that their torments will be increaſed as well as thoſe of the devils? Concerning them we are informed, (Jam. ii. 19.), that they believe there is one God, and tremble in the belief; expecting no doubt that he will inflict upon them, in due time, more ſevere torments than even thoſe which they now ſuffer. We are alſo informed that they are bound "in chains of darkneſs, to be reſerved unto judgement;" and "unto the judgement of the great day;" (2 Pet. ii. 4. and Jude 6.) which implies that their full puniſhment is not yet executed upon them, but that they are now reſerved as priſoners in hell, to receive their juſt recompence on the day of judgement. Hence it was that they thought Chriſt was "come to torment them before the time." Matth. viii. 29. Thus the puniſhment neither of wicked men nor devils will be complete before the final judgement.

No more will the happineſs of the ſaints be complete before that time. Therefore we are in the New Teſtament ſo often encouraged with promiſes of the reſurrection of the dead, and of the day when Chriſt ſhall come the ſecond time. Theſe things are ſpoken of as the great objects of the expectation and hope of Chriſtians. A ſtate of ſeparation of ſoul and body is to men an unnatural ſtate. Therefore when the bodies of the ſaints ſhall be raiſed from the dead, and their ſouls ſhall be again united to them, as their ſtate will be more natural, ſo doubtleſs it will be more happy. Their bodies will be *glorious* bodies, and prepared to adminiſter as much to their happineſs, as the bodies of the wicked will be to adminiſter to their miſery.

We may with good reaſon ſuppoſe the acceſſion of happineſs to the ſouls of the ſaints will be great, ſince the occaſion is repreſented as the marriage of the church and the Lamb; Rev. xix. 7. "The marriage of the Lamb is come, "and his wife hath made herſelf ready." Their joy will then be increaſed, becauſe they will have new arguments of joy. The body of Chriſt will then be perfect, the church will be complete: all the parts of it will have come into exiſtence, which will not be the caſe before the end of the

the world: no parts of it will be under ſin or affliction: all the members of it will be in a perfect ſtate; and they ſhall all be together by themſelves, none being mixed with ungodly men. Then the church will be as a bride adorned for her huſband, and therefore ſhe will exceedingly rejoice.

Then alſo the Mediator will have fully accompliſhed his work. He will then have deſtroyed, and will triumph over, all his enemies. Then Chriſt will have fully obtained his reward, and fully accompliſhed the deſign which was in his heart from all eternity. For theſe reaſons Chriſt himſelf will greatly rejoice, and his members muſt needs proportionably rejoice with him. Then God will have obtained the end of all the great works, which he hath been doing from the beginning of the world. All the deſigns of God will be unfolded in their events; then his marvellous contrivance in his hidden, intricate, and inexplicable works will appear, the ends being obtained. Then the works of God being perfected, the divine glory will more abundantly appear. Theſe things will cauſe a great acceſſion of happineſs to the ſaints, who ſhall behold them. Then God will have fully glorified himſelf, his Son, and his elect; then he will ſee that all is very good, and will entirely rejoice in his own works. At the ſame time the ſaints alſo, viewing the works of God brought thus to perfection, will rejoice in the view, and receive from it a large acceſſion of happineſs.

Then God will make more abundant manifeſtations of his glory, and of the glory of his Son; then he will more plentifully pour out his ſpirit, and make anſwerable additions to the glory of the ſaints, and by means of all theſe will ſo increaſe the happineſs of the ſaints, as ſhall be ſuitable to the commencement of the ultimate and moſt perfect ſtate of things, and to ſuch a joyful occaſion, the completion of all things. In this glory and happineſs will the ſaints remain for ever and ever.

SERMON XVI.

The World judged righteouſly by Jeſus Chriſt.

ACTS, xvii. 31.

Becauſe he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained.

HAving already diſcuſſed what was at firſt propoſed from theſe words, I now come to the

APPLICATION.

I. The *firſt uſe* proper to be made of this doctrine is of inſtruction. Hence many of the myſteries of divine Providence may be unfolded. There are many things in the dealings of God towards the children of men, which appear very myſterious, if we view them without having an eye to this laſt judgement, which yet, if we conſider this judgement, have no difficulty in them. As,

1. That God ſuffers the wicked to live and proſper in the world. The infinitely holy and wiſe Creator and Governor of the world muſt neceſſarily hate wickedneſs; yet we ſee many wicked men ſpreading themſelves as a green bay-tree; they live with impunity; things ſeem to go well with them, and the world ſmiles upon them. Many who have not been fit to live, who have held God and religion in the greateſt contempt, who have been open enemies to all that is good, who by their wickedneſs have been the peſts of mankind; many cruel tyrants, whoſe barbarities have been ſuch as would even fill one with horror to hear or read of them; yet have lived in great wealth and outward glory, have

have reigned over great and mighty kingdoms and empires, and have been honoured as a ſort of earthly gods.

Now, it is very myſterious, that the holy and righteous Governor of the world, whoſe eye beholds all the children of men, ſhould ſuffer it ſo to be, unleſs we look forward to the day of judgement; and then the myſtery is unravelled: For although God for the preſent keeps ſilence, and ſeems to let them alone; yet then he will give ſuitable manifeſtations of his diſpleaſure againſt their wickedneſs; they ſhall then receive condign puniſhment. The ſaints under the Old Teſtament were much ſtumbled at theſe diſpenſations of providence, as you may ſee in Job, ch. 21. and Pſal. 73. and Jer. ch. 12. The difficulty to them was ſo great, becauſe then a future ſtate and a day of judgement were not revealed with that clearneſs with which they are now.

2. God ſometimes ſuffers ſome of the beſt of men to be in great affliction, poverty, and perſecution. The wicked rule, while *they* are ſubject; the wicked are the head, and they are the tail; the wicked domineer, while they ſerve, and are oppreſſed, yea are trampled under their feet, as the mire of the ſtreets. Theſe things are very common, yet they ſeem to imply great confuſion. When the wicked are exalted to power and authority, and the godly are oppreſſed by them, things are quite out of joint: Prov. xxv. 26. "A "righteous man falling down before the wicked, is as a "troubled fountain, and a corrupt ſpring." Sometimes one wicked man makes many hundreds, yea thouſands, of precious ſaints a ſacrifice to his luſt and cruelty, or to his enmity againſt virtue and the truth, and puts them to death for no other reaſon but that for which they are eſpecially to be eſteemed and commended.

Now, if we look no further than to the preſent ſtate, theſe things appear ſtrange and unaccountable. But we ought not to confine our views within ſuch narrow limits. When God ſhall have put an end to the preſent ſtate, theſe things ſhall all be brought to rights. Though God ſuffers things ſo to be for the preſent, yet they ſhall not proceed in this courſe alway; comparatively ſpeaking, the preſent ſtate of things is *but for a moment.* When all ſhall be ſettled and fixed by a divine judgement, the righteous ſhall be exalted, honoured, and rewarded, and the wicked ſhall be depreſſed and put under their feet. However the wicked now prevail againſt the righteous, yet the righteous ſhall at laſt have the aſcendant, ſhall come off conquerors, and ſhall

ſee

ſee the juſt vengeance of God executed upon thoſe who now hate and perſecute them.

3. It is another myſtery of providence, that God ſuffers ſo much public injuſtice to take place in the world. There are not only private wrongs, which in this ſtate paſs unſettled, but many public wrongs, wrongs done by men acting in a public character, and wrongs which affect nations, kingdoms, and other public bodies of men. Many ſuffer by men in public offices, from whom there is no refuge, from whoſe deciſions there is no appeal. Now it ſeems a myſtery that theſe things are tolerated, when he that is rightfully the ſupreme judge and governor of the world is perfectly juſt; but at the final judgement all theſe wrongs ſhall be adjuſted, as well as thoſe of a more private nature.

II. Our *ſecond uſe* of this ſubject ſhall be to apply it to the awakening of ſinners. You that have not the fear of God before your eyes, that are not afraid to ſin againſt him, conſider ſeriouſly what you have heard concerning the day of judgement. Although theſe things be now future and unſeen, yet they are real and certain. If you be now left to yourſelves, if God keep ſilence, and judgement be not ſpeedily executed, it is not becauſe God is regardleſs how you live, and how you behave yourſelves. Now indeed God is inviſible to you, and his wrath is inviſible; but at the day of judgement, you yourſelves ſhall ſee him with your bodily eyes: you ſhall not then be able to keep out of his ſight, or to avoid ſeeing him: Rev. i. 7. "Behold he "cometh with clouds; and every eye ſhall ſee him, and "they alſo which pierced him: and all kindreds of the "earth ſhall wail becauſe of him." You ſhall ſee him coming in the clouds of heaven; your ears ſhall hear the laſt trumpet, that dreadful ſound, the voice of the archangel; your eyes ſhall ſee your judge ſitting on the throne, they ſhall ſee thoſe manifeſtations of wrath which there will be in his countenance; your ears ſhall hear him pronounce the ſentence.

Seriouſly conſider, if you live in the ways of ſin, and appear at that day with the guilt of it upon you, how you will be able to endure the ſight or the hearing of theſe things, and whether horror and amazement will not be likely to ſeize you, when you ſhall ſee the judge deſcending, and hear the trump of God.

What account will you be able to give, when it ſhall be inquired of you, why you led ſuch a ſinful wicked life? What

What will you be able to ſay for yourſelves, when it ſhall be aſked, why you neglected ſuch and ſuch particular duties, as the duty of ſecret prayer, for inſtance? or why you have habitually practiſed ſuch and ſuch particular ſins or luſts? Although you be ſo careleſs of your conduct and manner of life, make ſo light of ſin, and proceed in it ſo freely, with little or no dread or remorſe; yet you muſt give an account of every ſin that you commit, of every idle word that you ſpeak, and of every ſinful thought of your hearts. Every time you deviate from the rules of juſtice, of temperance, or of charity, every time you indulge any luſt, whether ſecretly or openly, you muſt give an account of it: it will never be forgotten, it ſtands written in that book which will be opened on that day.

Conſider the rule you will be judged by. It is the perfect rule of the divine law, which is exceeding ſtrict, and exceeding broad. And how will you ever be able to anſwer the demands of this law?——Conſider alſo,

1. That the judge will be your *ſupreme* judge. You will have no opportunity to appeal from his deciſion. This is often the caſe in this world; when we are diſſatisfied with the deciſions of a judge, we often may appeal to an higher, a more knowing, or a more juſt judicatory. But no ſuch appeal can be made from our divine Judge; no ſuch indulgence will be allowed: Or if it were allowed, there is no ſuperior judge to whom the appeal ſhould be made. By his deciſion, therefore, you muſt abide.

2. The judge will be *omnipotent*. Were he a mere man, like yourſelves, however he might judge and determine, you might reſiſt, and by the help of others, if not by your own ſtrength, prevent or elude the execution of the judgement. But the judge being omnipotent, this is utterly impoſſible. In vain is all reſiſtance, either by yourſelves, or by whatever help you can obtain: "Though hand join in "hand, the wicked ſhall not be unpuniſhed," Prov. xi. 21. As well might you "ſet the briers and thorns in battle a-"gainſt God," Iſa. xxvii. 4.

3. The judge will be *inexorable*. Human judges may be prevailed upon to reverſe their ſentence, or at leaſt to remit ſomething of its ſeverity. But in vain will be all your entreaties, all your cries and tears to this effect, with the great Judge of the world. Now indeed he inclines his ear, and is ready to hear the prayers, cries, and entreaties of all mankind; but then the day of grace will be paſt, and the door of mercy be ſhut: then although ye ſpread forth your

your hands, yet the Judge will hide his eyes from you; yea, though ye make many prayers, he will not hear: Iſa. i. 15. Then the Judge will deal in fury: his eye ſhall not ſpare, neither will he have pity: and though ye cry in his ears with a loud voice, yet will he not hear you: Ezek. viii. 18. And you will find no place of repentance in God, though you ſeek it carefully with tears.

4. The Judge at that day will not mix mercy with juſtice. The time for mercy to be ſhown to ſinners will then be paſt. Chriſt will then appear in another character than that of the merciful Saviour. Having laid aſide the inviting attributes of grace and mercy, he will clothe himſelf with juſtice and vengeance. He will not only, in general, exact of ſinners the demands of the law, but he will exact the whole, without any abatement; he will exact the very uttermoſt farthing, Matth. v. 26. Then Chriſt will come to fulfil that in Rev. xiv. 10. "The ſame ſhall drink of the wine of the "wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into "the cup of his indignation." The puniſhment threatened to ungodly men is *without any pity*: See Ezek. v. 11, "Neither ſhall mine eye ſpare; neither will I have any pity." Here all judgements have a mixture of mercy; but the wrath of God will be poured out upon the wicked without mixture, and vengeance will have its full weight.

III. I ſhall apply myſelf to ſeveral different characters of men.

1. To thoſe who live in ſecret wickedneſs. Let ſuch conſider, that for all theſe things God will bring them into judgement. Secrecy is your temptation. Promiſing yourſelves this, you practiſe many things, you indulge many luſts, under the covert of darkneſs, and in ſecret corners, which you would be aſhamed to do in the light of the ſun, and before the world. But this temptation is entirely groundleſs. All your ſecret abominations are even now perfectly known to God, and will alſo hereafter be made known both to angels and men: Luke xii. 2. 3. "For there "is nothing covered, that ſhall not be revealed; neither "hid, that ſhall not be known. Therefore whatſoever ye "have ſpoken in darkneſs, ſhall be heard in the light: and "that which ye have ſpoken in the ear in cloſets, ſhall be "proclaimed upon the houſe-tops."

Before human judges are brought only thoſe things which are known; but before this judge ſhall be brought the

the moſt "hidden things of darkneſs, and even the coun-"ſels of the heart," 1 Cor. iv. 5. All your ſecret uncleanneſs, all your ſecret fraud and injuſtice, all your laſcivious deſires, wiſhes, and deſigns, all your inward covetouſneſs, which is idolatry, all your malicious, envious, and revengeful thoughts and purpoſes, whether brought forth into practice or not, ſhall then be made manifeſt, and you ſhall be judged according to them. Of theſe things, however ſecret, there will be need of no other evidence than the teſtimony of God and of your own conſciences,

2. To ſuch as are not juſt and upright in their dealings with their fellow-men. Conſider, that all your dealings with men muſt be tried, muſt be brought forth into judgement, and there compared with the rules of the word of God. All your actions muſt be judged according to thoſe things which are found written in the book of the word of God. If your ways of dealing with men ſhall not agree with thoſe rules of righteouſneſs, they will be condemned. Now, the word of God directs us to practiſe entire juſtice: "That which is altogether juſt, ſhalt thou follow," Deut. xvi. 20.; and to do to others as we would they ſhould do to us. But how many are there, whoſe dealings with their fellow-men, if ſtrictly tried by theſe rules, would not ſtand the teſt?

God hath, in his word, forbidden all deceit and fraud in our dealings one with one another, Lev. xi. 13. He hath forbidden us to oppreſs one another, Lev. xxv. 14. But how frequent are practices contrary to thoſe rules, and which will not bear to be tried by them! How common are fraud and trickiſhneſs in trade! How will men endeavour to lead on thoſe with whom they trade in the dark, that ſo they may make their advantage! Yea, lying in trading is too common a thing among us: How common are ſuch things as that mentioned, Prov. xx. 14. "It is nought, "it is nought, ſaith the buyer; but when he is gone his "way, then he boaſteth."

Many men will take the advantage of another's ignorance to advance their own gain, to his wrong; yea, they ſeem not to ſcruple ſuch practices. Beſide downright lying, men have many ways of blinding and deceiving one another in trade, which are by no means right in the ſight of God, and will appear to be very unjuſt, when they ſhall be tried by the rule of God's word at the day of judgement. And how common a thing is oppreſſion or extortion, in taking any advantage that men can by any means obtain, to get the ut-

moſt poſſible of their neighbour for what they have to diſpoſe of, and their neighbour needs!

Let ſuch conſider, that there is a God in heaven, who beholds them, and ſees how they conduct themſelves in their daily traffic with one another; and that he will try their works another day. Juſtice ſhall aſſuredly take place at laſt. The righteous Governor of the world will not ſuffer injuſtice without controul; he will controul and rectify it, by returning the injury upon the head of the injurer: Matth. vii. 2. "With what meaſure ye mete, it ſhall be meaſured to you "again."

3. To thoſe who plead for the lawfulneſs of practices generally condemned by God's people. You who do this, conſider that your practices muſt be tried at the day of judgement. Conſider, whether or no they are likely to be approved by the moſt holy Judge at that day: Prov. v. 21. "The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord; and "he pondereth all his goings." However, by your carnal reaſonings, you may deceive your own hearts, yet you will not be able to deceive the judge; he will not hearken to your excuſes, but will try your ways by the rule; he will know whether they be ſtraight or crooked.

When you plead for theſe and thoſe liberties which you take, let it be conſidered, whether they be likely to be allowed of by the judge at the laſt great day. Will they bear to be tried by his eyes, which are purer than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity?

4. To thoſe who are wont to excuſe their wickedneſs. Will the excuſes which you make for yourſelves be accepted at the day of judgement? If you excuſe yourſelves to your own conſciences, by ſaying, that you were under ſuch and ſuch temptations which you could not withſtand; that corrupt nature prevailed, and you could not overcome it; that it would have been ſo and ſo to your damage, if you had done otherwiſe; that if you had done ſuch a duty, you would have brought yourſelves into difficulty, would have incurred the diſpleaſure of ſuch and ſuch friends, or would have been deſpiſed and laughed at; or if you ſay, you did no more than it was the common cuſtom to do, no more than many godly men have done, no more than certain perſons of good reputation now practiſe; that if you had done otherwiſe, you would have been ſingular; if theſe be your excuſes for the ſins which you commit, or for the duties which you neglect, let me aſk you, will they appear

pear ſufficient when they ſhall be examined at the day of judgement?

5. To thoſe who live in impenitence and unbelief. There are ſome perſons who live in no open vice, and perhaps conſcientiouſly avoid ſecret immorality, who yet live in impenitence and unbelief. They are indeed called upon *to repent and believe the goſpel*, to forſake their evil ways and *thoughts*, and to return to God, that he may have mercy on them; to come unto Chriſt, *labouring*, and *heavy-laden with ſin*, that they may obtain *reſt* of him; and are aſſured, that if they "believe, they ſhall be ſaved;" and that if they "believe not, they ſhall be damned;" and all the moſt powerful motives are ſet before them, to induce them to comply with theſe exhortations, eſpecially thoſe drawn from the eternal world; yet they perſiſt in ſin, they remain impenitent and unhumbled; they will not come unto Chriſt, that they may have life.

Now, ſuch men ſhall be brought into judgement for their conduct, as well as more groſs ſinners. Nor will they be any more able to ſtand in the judgement than the other. They reſiſt the moſt powerful means of grace; go on in ſin againſt the clear light of the goſpel; refuſe to hearken to the kindeſt calls and invitations; reject the moſt amiable Saviour, the Judge himſelf; and deſpiſe the free offers of eternal life, glory, and felicity. And how will they be able to anſwer for theſe things at the tribunal of Chriſt?

IV. If there be a day of judgement appointed, then let all be very ſtrict in trying their own ſincerity. God on that day will diſcover the ſecrets of all hearts. The judgement of that day will be like the fire, which burns up whatſoever is not true gold; wood, hay, ſtubble, and droſs, ſhall be all conſumed by the ſcorching fire of that day. The Judge will be like a refiner's fire, and fuller's ſoap, which will cleanſe away all filthineſs, however it may be coloured over: Mal. iii. 2. "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who "ſhall ſtand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's "fire, and like fuller's ſoap;" and chap. iv. 1. "For behold "the day cometh that ſhall burn as an oven, and all the "proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, ſhall be ſtubble, and "the day that cometh ſhall burn them up, ſaith the Lord "of hoſts."

There are multitudes of men that wear the guiſe of ſaints, appear like ſaints, and their ſtate, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of their neighbours, is good. They have

ſheep's clothing. But no diſguiſe can hide them from the eyes of the judge of the world. His eyes are as a flame of fire: they ſearch the hearts and try the reins of the children of men. He will ſee whether they be ſound at heart; he will ſee from what principles they have acted. A fair ſhow will in no degree deceive him, as it doth men in the preſent ſtate. It will ſignify nothing to ſay, "Lord, we "have eaten and drunk in thy preſence; and in thy name "have we caſt out devils, and in thy name have done ma-"ny wonderful works." It will ſignify nothing to pretend to a great deal of comfort and joy, and to the experience of great religious affections, and to your having done many things in religion and morality, unleſs you have ſome greater evidences of ſincerity.

Wherefore let every one take heed that he be not deceived concerning himſelf; and that he depend not on that which will not bear examination at the day of judgement. Be not contented with this, that you have the judgement of men, the judgement of godly men, or that of miniſters, in your favour. Conſider that they are not to be your judges at laſt. Take occaſion frequently to compare your hearts with the word of God; that is the rule by which you are to be finally tried and judged. And try yourſelves by your works, by which alſo you muſt be tried at laſt. Inquire whether you lead holy Chriſtian lives, whether you perform univerſal and unconditional obedience to all God's commands, and whether you do it from a truly gracious reſpect to God.

Alſo frequently beg of God, the judge, that he would ſearch you, try you now, and diſcover you to yourſelves, that you may ſee if you be inſincere in religion; and that he would lead you in the way everlaſting. Beg of God, that if you be not upon a good foundation, he would unſettle you, and fix you upon the ſure foundation. The example of the Pſalmiſt in this is worthy of imitation: Pſal. xxvi. 1. 2. "Judge me, O Lord, examine me, and prove "me; try my reins and mine heart;" and Pſal. cxxxix. 23. 24. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, "and know my thoughts. And ſee if there be any wic-"ked way in me, and lead me in the way everlaſting." God will ſearch us hereafter, and diſcover what we are, both to ourſelves and to all the world; let us pray that he would ſearch us, and diſcover our hearts to us now. We have need of divine help in this matter; for the heart is deceitful above all things.

V. If

V. If God hath appointed a day to judge the world, let us judge and condemn ourſelves for our ſins. This we muſt do, if we would not be judged and condemned for them on that day. If we would eſcape condemnation, we muſt ſee that we juſtly may be condemned; we muſt be ſo ſenſible of our vileneſs and guilt, as to ſee that we deſerve all that condemnation and puniſhment which are threatened; and that we are in the hands of God, who is the ſovereign diſpoſer of us, and will do with us as ſeemeth to himſelf good. Let us therefore often reflect on our ſins, confeſs them before God, condemn and abhor ourſelves, be truly humbled, and repent in duſt and aſhes.

VI. If theſe things be ſo, let us by no means be forward to judge others. Some are forward to judge others, to judge their hearts both in general and upon particular occaſions, to determine as to the principles, motives, and ends of their actions. But this is to aſſume the province of God, and to ſet up ourſelves as lords and judges. Rom. xiv. 4. "Who art thou, that thou judgeſt another man's ſervant?" Jam. iv. 11. "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He "that ſpeaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his bro-"ther, ſpeaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law." To be thus diſpoſed to judge and act cenſoriouſly towards others, is the way to be judged and condemned ourſelves. Matth. vii. 1. 2. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For "with what judgement ye judge, ye ſhall be judged: "and with what meaſure ye mete, it ſhall be meaſured to "you again."

VII. This doctrine affords matter of great conſolation to the godly. This day of judgement, which is ſo terrible to ungodly men, affords no ground of terror to you, but abundant ground of joy and ſatisfaction. For though you now meet with more affliction and trouble than moſt wicked men, yet on that day you ſhall be delivered from all affliction, and from all trouble. If you be unjuſtly treated by wicked men, and abuſed by them, what a comfort is it to the injured, that they may appeal to God, who judgeth righteouſly. The Pſalmiſt uſed often to comfort himſelf with this.

Upon theſe accounts the ſaints have reaſon to love the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt. 2 Tim. iv. 8. "Henceforth "there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs, which "the Lord the righteous judge ſhall give me at that day: "and

" and not to me only, but to all thoſe that love his ap-
" pearing." This is to the ſaints a bleſſed hope. Tit. ii. 13.
" Looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appear-
" ing of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt." This day may well be the object of their eager deſire, and when they hear of Chriſt's coming to judgement, they may well ſay, " Even ſo come, Lord Jeſus," Rev. xxii. 20. It will be the moſt glorious day that ever the ſaints ſaw; it will be ſo both to thoſe who ſhall die, and whoſe ſouls ſhall go to heaven, and to thoſe who ſhall then be found alive on earth: it will be the wedding-day of the church. Surely then in the conſideration of the approach of this day there is ground of great conſolation to the ſaints.

SER-

SERMON XVII.*

The vain Self-flatteries of the Sinner.

PSAL. xxxvi. 2.

For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.

IN the foregoing verse, David says, that the transgression of the wicked said within his heart, "that there is no "fear of God before his eyes;" that is, when he saw that the wicked went on in sin, in an allowed way of wickedness, it convinced him, that he was not afraid of those terrible judgements, and of that wrath with which God hath threatened sinners. If he were afraid of these he could never go on so securely in sin, as he doth.

In our text he gives the reason why the wicked did not fear. It was a strange thing that men, who enjoyed such light as they did in the land of Israel, who read and heard those many awful threatnings which were written in the book of the law, should not be afraid to go on in sin. But saith the Psalmist, *They flatter themselves in their own eyes:* they have something or other which they make a foundation of encouragement, whereby they persuade themselves that they shall escape those judgements; and that makes them put far away the evil day.

In this manner he proceeds, *until his iniquity be found to be hateful;* that is, until he finds by experience that it is a more dreadful thing to sin against God, and break his holy commands, than he imagined. He thinks sin to be sweet, and hides it as a sweet morsel under his tongue: he loves it, and flatters himself in it, till at length he finds, by expe-

* Not dated.

rience,

rience, that it is bitter as gall and wormwood. Though he thinks the commiſſion of ſin to be lovely, yet he will find the fruit of it to be hateful, and what he cannot endure. Prov. xxiii. 32. "At laſt it will bite like a ſerpent, and ſting "like an adder." ——Here obſerve,

1. The ſubject ſpoken of is the *wicked man*, of whom the Pſalmiſt had been ſpeaking in the foregoing verſe.

2. His action in *flattering himſelf in his own eyes*: i. e. he makes himſelf and his caſe to appear to himſelf, or in his own eyes, better than it is.

3. How long he continues ſo to do, *until his iniquity be found to be hateful.* Which may be taken for his ſin itſelf, as the wicked will ſee how odious ſin is to God, when he ſhall feel the effects of his hatred, and how hateful to angels and ſaints; or rather the cauſe is here put for the effect, the tree for its fruit, and he will find his iniquity to be hateful, as he will find the hatefulneſs and feel the terribleneſs of the *fruit* of his iniquity.

DOCTRINE. Wicked men generally flatter themſelves with hopes of eſcaping puniſhment, till it actually comes upon them.

There are but few ſinners who deſpair, who give up the cauſe and conclude with themſelves, that they ſhall go to hell; yet there are but few who do not go to hell. It is to be feared that men go to hell every day out of this country; yet very few of them ſuffer themſelves to believe, that they are in any great danger of that puniſhment. They go on ſinning and travelling in the direct road to the pit; yet by one mean or other they perſuade themſelves that they ſhall never fall into it.

In my preſent diſcourſe, I ſhall,

1. Mention ſome things in confirmation of the doctrine, that ſinners flatter themſelves with the hope of impunity.

2. Mention ſome of the various ways wherein ſinners flatter themſelves in that hope.

3. Show that ſinners generally go on flattering themſelves, till puniſhment actually overtakes them.

I. I am to mention ſome things in confirmation of the doctrine, that ſinners flatter themſelves with the hope of future impunity.

1. We

1. We are ſo taught in the word of God. Beſide our text you may ſee, Deut. xxix. 18. 19. "Leſt there "ſhould be among you man, or woman, or family, or "tribe, whoſe heart turneth away this day from the "Lord our God. Leſt there ſhould be among you a "root that beareth gall and wormwood, and it come to paſs "when he heareth the words of this curſe, that he *bleſs* "*himſelf in his heart*, ſaying, I ſhall have peace, though I "walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenneſs "to thirſt." Where it is ſuppoſed that they whoſe hearts turn away from God, and are roots that bear gall and wormwood, generally bleſs themſelves in their hearts, ſaying, *We ſhall have peace.*

See alſo Pſal. xlix. 17. 18. "When he dieth, he ſhall "carry nothing away: his glory ſhall not deſcend after "him, though whiles he lived, he *bleſſed his ſoul.*" And Pſal. l. 21. "Theſe things thou haſt done, and I kept ſi-"lence: thou thoughteſt that I was altogether ſuch a one "as thyſelf: But I will reprove thee, and ſet them in or-"der before thee."

2. It is very evident, that ſinners flatter themſelves that they ſhall eſcape puniſhment, by this, that otherwiſe they would be in dreadful and continual diſtreſs. Otherwiſe, as long as they are in ſin, they could never live and go about ſo chearfully as they now do: Their lives would be filled with ſorrow and mourning, and they would be in continual uneaſineſs and diſtreſs; as much as thoſe that are exerciſed with ſome violent pain of body. But it is evident that it is not in fact ſo; it is apparent that men are careleſs and ſecure; that they are not much concerned about future puniſhment, and that they chearfully purſue their buſineſs and recreations. Therefore they undoubtedly flatter themſelves, that they ſhall not be eternally miſerable in hell, as they are threatened in the word of God.

3. It is evident that they flatter themſelves with hopes that they ſhall eſcape puniſhment, as otherwiſe they would certainly be reſtrained, at leaſt from many of thoſe ſins in which they now live: they would not proceed in wilful courſes of ſin. The tranſgreſſion of the wicked convinced the Pſalmiſt, and is enough to convince every one, that there is no fear of God before his eyes, and that he flatters himſelf in his own eyes. It would be impoſſible for men allowedly from day to day to do thoſe very things, which they know are threatened with everlaſting deſtruction, if

they did not ſome way encourage themſelves they ſhould nevertheleſs eſcape that deſtruction.

II. I ſhall mention ſome of the various ways wherein ſinners flatter themſelves in their own eyes.

1. Some flatter themſelves with a ſecret hope, that there is no ſuch thing as another world. They hear a great deal of preaching, and a great deal of talk about hell, and about the eternal judgement; but thoſe things do not ſeem to them to be real. They never ſaw any thing of them; they never ſaw hell, never ſaw the devils and damned ſpirits; and therefore are ready to ſay with themſelves, How do I know that there is any ſuch thing as another world? When the beaſts die, there is an end of them, and how do I know but that it will be ſo with me? Perhaps all theſe things are nothing but the inventions of men, nothing but cunningly-deviſed fables.

Such thoughts are apt to riſe in the minds of ſinners, and the devil ſets in to enforce them. Such thoughts are an eaſe to them; therefore they wiſh they were true, and that makes them the more ready to think that they are indeed true. So that they are hardened in the way of ſin, by infidelity and atheiſtical thoughts. Pſal. xiv. 1. "The "fool hath ſaid in his heart, There is no God." Pſal. xciv. 6. 7. "They ſlay the widow and the ſtranger, and murder "the fatherleſs. Yet they ſay, The Lord ſhall not ſee; nei"ther ſhall the God of Jacob regard it."

2. Some flatter themſelves that death is a great way off, and that they ſhall hereafter have much opportunity to ſeek ſalvation; and they think if they earneſtly ſeek it, though it be a great while hence, they ſhall obtain. Although they ſee no reaſon to conclude that they ſhall live long, and perhaps they do not poſitively conclude that they ſhall; yet it doth not come into their minds that their lives are really uncertain, and that it is doubtful whether they will live another year. Such a thought as this doth not take any hold of them. And although they do not abſolutely determine that they ſhall live to old age or to middle age, yet they ſecretly flatter themſelves with ſuch an imagination. They are diſpoſed to believe ſo, and do ſo far believe it, that they act upon it, and run the venture of it.

Men will believe that things will be as they chuſe to have them, without reaſon, and ſometimes without the appearance of reaſon, as is moſt apparent in this caſe. Pſal. xlix. 11. "Their inward thought is, that their houſes ſhall con-

"tinue

" tinue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all genera-
" tions; they call their lands after their own names."

The prepoſſeſſion and deſire of men to have it ſo, is the principal thing that makes them believe ſo. However, there are ſeveral other things which they uſe as arguments to flatter themſelves. Perhaps they think with themſelves, that ſince they are at preſent in health, or in youth, or that ſince they are uſeful men, do a great deal of good, and both themſelves and others pray for the continuance of their lives; they are not likely to be removed by death very ſoon.

If they ſhall live many years in the world, they think that it is very probable they ſhall be converted before they die; as they expect hereafter to have much more convenient opportunities to become converted, than they have now. And by ſome means or other they think they ſhall get thro' their work before they arrive at old age.

3. Some flatter themſelves that they lead moral and orderly lives, and therefore think that they ſhall not be damned. They think with themſelves that they live not in any vice, that they take care to wrong no man, are juſt and honeſt dealers; that they are not addicted to hard drinking, or to uncleanneſs, or to bad language; that they keep the Sabbath ſtrictly, are conſtant attendants on the public worſhip, and maintain the worſhip of God in their families. Therefore they hope that God will not caſt them into hell. They ſee not why God ſhould be ſo angry with them as that would imply, ſeeing they are ſo orderly and regular in their walk! they ſee not that they have done enough to anger him to that degree. And if they have angered him, they imagine they have alſo done a great deal to pacify him.

If they be not as yet converted, and it be neceſſary that they ſhould experience any other converſion in order to their ſalvation, they hope that their orderly and ſtrict lives will move God to give them converting grace. They hope that ſurely God will not ſee thoſe that live as they do go to hell. Thus they flatter themſelves, as thoſe we read of, Luke xviii. 9. " that truſted in themſelves that they were " righteous."

4. Some make the advantages under which they live an occaſion of ſelf-flattery. They flatter themſelves, becauſe they live in a place where the goſpel is powerfully preached, and among a religious people, where many have been converted; and they think it will be much eaſier for them to be ſaved on that account. Thus they abuſe the grace of

God to their deſtruction; they do that which the ſcriptures call *deſpiſing the riches of God's goodneſs*; Rom. ii. 4. "Or "deſpiſeſt thou the riches of his goodneſs, and forbearance, "and long-ſuffering; not knowing that the goodneſs of God "leadeth thee to repentance?"

Some flatter themſelves, becauſe they are born of godly parents, who are dear to God, who have often and earneſtly prayed for them, they hope that their prayers will be heard; and that encourages them to go on in the way of neglecting their ſouls. The Jews had great dependence upon this, that they were the children of Abraham: John viii. 33. they make their boaſt, "We be Abraham's ſeed;" and in verſ. 39. "Abraham is our father."

5. Some flatter themſelves with their own intentions. They intend to neglect themſelves, and give themſelves liberty for a while longer, and then to reform. Though now they neglect their ſouls, and are going on in ſin; yet they intend ere long to beſtir themſelves, to leave off their ſins, and to ſet themſelves to ſeek God. They hear that there is great encouragement for thoſe who earneſtly ſeek God, that they ſhall find him. So they intend to do; they propoſe to ſeek with a great deal of earneſtneſs. They are told, that there are many who ſeek to enter the kingdom of heaven, who ſhall not be able; but they intend, not only to ſeek, but *to ſtrive*. However, for the preſent they allow themſelves in their eaſe, ſloth, and pleaſure, minding only earthly things.

Or if they ſhould be ſeized with ſome mortal diſtemper, and ſhould draw near to the grave, before the time which they lay out in their minds for reformation, they think how earneſtly they would pray and cry to God for mercy; and as they hear God is a merciful God, who taketh no delight in the death of ſinners, they hence flatter themſelves that they ſhall move God to have pity on them.

There are but few who are ſinners, and know themſelves to be ſuch, who do not encourage themſelves with intentions of future repentance and reformation; but few who do not flatter themſelves, that they ſhall in good earneſt ſet themſelves to ſeek God ſome time or other. Hell is full of *good intenders*, who never proved to be *true performers*: Acts xxiv. 25. "Go thy way for this time; when I have a "convenient ſeaſon, I will call for thee."

6. There are ſome who flatter themſelves, that they do, and have done, a great deal for their ſalvation, and therefore hope they ſhall obtain, when indeed they neither do what they

they ought to do, nor what they might do in their preſent ſtate of unregeneracy; nor are they in any likely way to be converted. They think they are ſtriving, when they neglect many moral and ſome inſtituted duties; nor do they exert themſelves as if it were for their lives; they are not violent for the kingdom of heaven.

There are doubtleſs many ſuch; many are concerned, and are ſeeking, and do many things, and think that they are in a very fair way to obtain the kingdom of God; yet there is great danger that they will prove at laſt to be ſome of the fooliſh virgins, and be found without oil in their veſſels

7. Some hope by their ſtrivings to obtain ſalvation of themſelves. They have a ſecret imagination, that they ſhall, by degrees, work in themſelves ſorrow and repentance of ſin, and love towards God and Jeſus Chriſt. Their ſtriving is not ſo much an earneſt ſeeking to God, as a ſtriving to do themſelves that which is the work of God. Many who are now ſeeking have this imagination, and labour, read, pray, hear ſermons, and go to private meetings, with the view of making themſelves holy, and of working in themſelves holy affections.

Many, who only project and deſign to turn to God hereafter, are apt to think that it is an eaſy thing to be converted, that it is a thing which will be in their own power at any time, when they ſhall earneſtly ſet themſelves to it.

8. Some ſinners flatter themſelves, that they are already converted. They ſit down and reſt in a falſe hope, perſuading themſelves that all their ſins are pardoned; that God loves them; that they ſhall go to heaven when they die; and that they need trouble themſelves no more: Rev. iii. 17. "Becauſe thou ſayeſt, I am rich, and increaſed with "goods, and have need of nothing; and knoweſt not that "thou art wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, "and naked."

III. Sinners very generally go on flattering themſelves in ſome or other of theſe ways, till their puniſhment actually overtakes them. Theſe are the baits by which Satan catches ſouls, and draws them into his ſnare. They are ſuch ſelf-flatteries as theſe that keep men from ſeeing what danger they are in, and that make them go ſecurely on in the way they are in, "as the bird haſteth to the ſnare, and knoweth "not that it is for his life."

Thoſe

Thoſe that flatter themſelves with hopes of living a great while longer in the world, very commonly continue ſo to do till death comes. Death comes upon them when they expect it not; they look upon it as a great way off, when there is but a ſtep between them and death. They thought not of dying at that time, nor at any time near it. When they were young, they propoſed to live a good while longer; and if they happen to live till middle age, they ſtill maintain the ſame thought, that they are not yet near death; and ſo that thought goes along with them as long as they live, or till they are juſt about to die.

Men often have a dependence on their own righteouſneſs, and as long as they live are never brought off from it. Multitudes uphold themſelves with their own intentions, till all their proſpects are daſhed in pieces by death. They put off the work which they have to do till ſuch a time; and when that comes, they put it off to another time, until death, which cannot be put off, overtakes them. There are many alſo that hold a falſe hope, a perſuaſion that they belong to God; and as long as they live, by all the marks and ſigns which are given of a true convert, they never will be perſuaded to let go their hope, till it is rent from them by death.

Thus men commonly uphold themſelves, and make themſelves eaſy, till hell-fire makes them uneaſy. Everlaſting ruin comes upon them as a ſnare, and all their hopes are at once cut off, and turned into everlaſting deſpair: 1 Theſſ. v. 3. "When they ſhall ſay, Peace and ſafety; then ſudden "deſtruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman "with child; and they ſhall not eſcape."

APPLICATION.

1. Hence we learn one reaſon why there are but few ſaved, and why ſo many periſh from under the goſpel. All men know that they muſt die, and all that ſit under the light of the goſpel have been told many a time, that after this there is another world; that there are but two ſtates in that other world, a ſtate of eternal happineſs, and a ſtate of eternal miſery; that there is but one way of eſcaping the miſery and obtaining the bleſſedneſs of eternity, which is by obtaining an intereſt in Chriſt, through faith in him; and that this life is the only opportunity of obtaining an intereſt in Chriſt. Yet men are ſo much given to flatter themſelves in

in thoſe ways which we have mentioned, that there are but few that ſeaſonably take care of their ſalvation. Indeed they cannot but be in ſome meaſure concerned about their ſouls; yet they flatter themſelves with one thing or other, ſo that they are kept ſteadily and uninterruptedly going on in the broad way to deſtruction.

2. Hence we learn the reaſon why awakening truths of ſcripture, and awaking ſermons, make no more impreſſion upon men. It is in itſelf a wonderful and ſurpriſing thing, that God's denunciations of eternal miſery, and threatenings of caſting ſinners into the lake that burneth with fire and brimſtone for ever and ever, do not affect them, do not ſtartle them. But the truth is, they flatter themſelves, by ſuch means as we have mentioned, that this dreadful miſery is not for them; that they ſhall eſcape it, though multitudes of others are involved in it. They take not theſe threatenings to themſelves; they ſeem to think that they do not belong to them.

How many are there in this congregation, who, for all the awakening ſermons they have heard, are yet ſecure in ſin! and who, although they are ſenſible that they are in a Chriſtleſs condition, and are ſtill going on in ſin, yet intend to go to heaven, and expect that by ſome means or other they ſhall arrive there. They are often told, that God is very angry with them; yet they think God is a very merciful God, and they ſhall be able to pacify him. If they be told how uncertain life is, that doth not awaken them, becauſe they flatter themſelves with long life. If they be told how dangerous it is to delay the buſineſs of religion, they promiſe themſelves, that they will hereafter engage in it with more earneſtneſs than others, and ſo obtain the end, the ſalvation of their ſouls. Others, when they are told that many ſhall ſeek who ſhall not be able to obtain, think ſurely, that *they*, having done ſo much for ſalvation, ſhall not be denied.

3. Let every ſinner examine himſelf, whether he do not flatter himſelf in ſome of thoſe ways which have been mentioned. What is it in your own minds which makes you think it is ſafe for you to delay turning to God? What is it that encourages you to run ſuch a venture as you do by delaying this neceſſary work? Is it that you hope there is no ſuch ſtate as heaven or hell, and have a ſuſpicion that there is no God? Is it this that makes you ſecure? or is it that you are not much afraid but that you ſhall have opportunity enough a great while hence to mind ſuch things?

Is

Is it an intention of a future ſeeking at a more convenient ſeaſon? and are you perſuaded that God will hearken to you then, after you ſhall have ſo long turned a deaf ear to his commands and gracious invitations? Are you encouraged to commit ſin, becauſe you hope to repent of it? Are you encouraged by the mercy of God to be his enemies? and do you reſolve ſtill to provoke him to anger, becauſe you think he is eaſily pacified?

Or do you think that your converſion is in your own power, and that you can turn to God when you pleaſe? Is it becauſe you have been born of godly parents that you are ſo ſecure? or do you imagine that you are in a fair way to be converted? Do you think that what you have done in religion will engage God to pity you, and that he never can have the heart to condemn one who has lived in ſo orderly a manner? or do you think that you are indeed converted already? and doth that encourage you to take a liberty in ſinning? Or are you ſecure, becauſe you are ſo ſtupid as to think nothing about theſe things? Do you let theſe concerns wholly alone, and ſcarcely ever think at all how it will be with you after you are dead?

Certainly it muſt be one or more of theſe things which keeps you in your ſecurity, and encourages you to go on in ſin. Examine, therefore, and ſee which of them it is.

4. By the text and doctrine be perſuaded to leave off thus flattering yourſelves in your own eyes. You are therein informed, that thoſe who do as you do commonly continue ſo doing till their puniſhment actually comes upon them. Thereby you may be convinced of the vanity of all ſuch flatteries. Be afraid of that which you are ſure is the devil's bait: "Surely in vain is the net ſpread in the ſight of any bird," Prov. i. 17.

You are not only told in the ſcriptures, that ſinners are generally thus allured to hell, but your own reaſon may convince you that it is ſo. For doubtleſs other ſinners have as much ground to hope to eſcape puniſhment as you; and it is evident, that they generally do hope to eſcape. Men under the goſpel almoſt univerſally think they ſhall not go to hell: if it were otherwiſe, they could have no peace or comfort in the world. Yet what multitudes have we reaſon to conclude go down from under the preaching of the goſpel to the pit of deſtruction! Now, this is ſurely enough to convince any ſober prudent perſon of the folly of ſuch flattery, and of the folly of every one that doth not immediately ſet about his great work with his might. If you could

could have acceſs to the damned, you would hear many of them curſe themſelves, for thus flattering themſelves while they lived in this world; and you would have the ſame doctrine preached to you by their wailings and yellings which is now preached to you from the pulpit.

If your temptation to ſecurity be unbelief of the fundamental doctrines of religion, ſuch as the being of God, of another world, and an eternal judgement, you may conſider, that though that makes you ſecure at preſent, yet it will not do always, it will not ſtand by when you come to die. The fool often in health ſaith, *There is no God*; but when he comes to die, he cannot reſt in any ſuch ſuppoſition. Then he is generally ſo much convinced in his own conſcience, that there is a God, that he is in dreadful amazement for fear of his eternal wrath. It is folly, therefore, to flatter yourſelves with any ſuppoſition now which you will not then be able to hold.

If you depend on long life, conſider how many who have depended on the ſame thing, and had as much reaſon to depend on it as you, have died within your remembrance.

Is it becauſe you are outwardly of an orderly life and converſation, that you think you ſhall be ſaved? How unreaſonable is it to ſuppoſe, that God ſhould be ſo obliged by thoſe actions, which he knows are not done from the leaſt reſpect or regard to him, but wholly with a private view! Is it becauſe you are under great advantages that you are not much afraid but that you ſhall ſome time or other be converted, and therefore neglect yourſelves and your ſpiritual intereſts? And were not the people of Bethſaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum, under as great advantages as you, when Chriſt himſelf preached the goſpel to them, almoſt continually, and wrought ſuch a multitude of miracles among them? Yet he ſays, that it ſhall be more tolerable in the day of judgement for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for thoſe cities.

Do you expect you ſhall be ſaved, however you neglect yourſelves, becauſe you were born of godly parents? Hear what Chriſt ſaith, Matth. iii. 9. "Think not to ſay within "yourſelves, we have Abraham to our father." Do you flatter yourſelves that you ſhall obtain mercy, though others do not, becauſe you intend hereafter to ſeek it more earneſtly than others? Yet you deceive yourſelves, if you think that you intend better than many of thoſe others, or better than many who are now in hell once intended.

If you think you are in a way of earneſt ſeeking, conſider, whether or no you do not mind other things yet more? If you imagine that you have it in your own power to work yourſelves up to repentance, conſider, that you muſt aſſuredly give up that imagination before you can have repentance wrought in you. If you think yourſelves already converted, and that encourages you to give yourſelves the greater liberty in ſinning, this is a certain ſign that you are not converted.

Wherefore abandon all theſe ways of flattering yourſelves; no longer follow the devil's bait; and let nothing encourage you to go on in ſin; but immediately and henceforth ſeek God with all your heart, and ſoul, and ſtrength.

SER.

SERMON XVIII.*

Wicked Men uſeful in their Deſtruction only.

EZEK. xv. 2. 3. 4.

Son of man, What is the vine-tree more than any tree? or than a branch which is among the trees of the foreſt? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any veſſel thereon? Behold, it is caſt into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midſt of it is burnt: is it meet for any work?

THE viſible church of God is here compared to the vine-tree, as is evident by God's own explanation of the allegory, in verſ. 6. 7. and 8. "Therefore thus ſaith the Lord "God, As the vine-tree among the trees of the foreſt, "which I have given to the fire for fuel, ſo will I give "the inhabitants of Jeruſalem," &c. And it may be underſtood of mankind in general. We find man often in ſcripture compared to a vine. So in chap. 32. of Deuteronomy, "Their vine is the vine of Sodom, and of the fields "of Gomorrah. Their grapes are grapes of gall." And Pſal. lxxx. 8. "Thou haſt brought a vine out of Egypt;" verſ. 14. "Look down from heaven, behold, and viſit this "vine." And Cant. ii. 15. "The foxes that ſpoil the vines; "for our vines have tender grapes." Iſa. v. at the beginning, "My beloved hath a vineyard, and he planted it with "the choiceſt vine." Jer. ii. 21. "I had planted thee a "noble vine." Hoſ. x. 1. "Iſrael is an empty vine." So in chap. 15. of John, viſible Chriſtians are compared to the *branches of a vine.*

Man is very fitly repreſented by the vine. The weakneſs and dependence of the vine on other things which ſupport

* Dated July 1734.

it, well repreſents to us what a poor, feeble, dependent creature man is, and how, if left to himſelf, he muſt fall into miſchief, and cannot help himſelf. The viſible people of God are fitly compared to a vine, becauſe of the care and cultivation of the huſbandman, or vine-dreſſer. The buſineſs of huſbandmen in the land of Iſrael was very much in their vineyards, about vines; and the care they exerciſed to fence them, to defend them, to prune them, to prop them up, and to cultivate them, well repreſented that merciful care which God exerciſes towards his viſible people; and this latter is often in ſcripture expreſsly compared to the former.

In the words now read is repreſented,

1. How wholly uſeleſs and unprofitable, even beyond other trees, a vine is, in caſe of unfruitfulneſs: "What is "a vine-tree more than any tree, or than a branch which "is among the trees of the foreſt?" i. e. if it do not bear fruit. Men make much more of a vine than of other trees; they take great care of it, to wall it in, to dig about it, to prune it, and the like. It is much more highly eſteemed than one of the trees of the foreſt; they are deſpiſed in compariſon with it. And if it bear fruit, it is indeed much preferable to other trees; for the fruit of it yields a noble liquor; as it is ſaid in Jotham's parable, Judg. ix. 13. "And "the vine ſaid unto them, Should I leave my wine, which "cheareth God and man?"

But if it bear no fruit, it is more unprofitable than the trees of the foreſt; for the wood of them is good for timber; but the wood of the vine is fit for no work; as in the text, "Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or "will men take a pin of it to hang any veſſel thereon?"

2. The only thing for which a vine is uſeful, in caſe of barrenneſs, viz. for fuel: "Behold, it is caſt into the "fire for fuel." It is wholly conſumed; no part of it is worth a ſaving, to make any inſtrument of it, for any work.

Doctrine. If men bring forth no fruit to God, they are wholly uſeleſs, unleſs in their deſtruction.

For the proof of this doctrine, I ſhall ſhow,

1. That it is very evident, that there can be but two ways in which man can be uſeful, viz. either in *acting*, or in *being acted upon*, and *diſpoſed of*.

2. That

2. That man can no otherwiſe be uſeful actively than by bringing forth fruit to God.

3. That if he bring not forth fruit to God, there is no other way in which he can be paſſively uſeful, but in being deſtroyed.

4. In that way he may be uſeful without bearing fruit.

I. There are but two ways in which man can be uſeful, viz. either in acting or being acted upon. If man be an uſeful ſort of creature, he muſt be ſo either actively or paſſively: there is no medium. If he be uſeful to any purpoſe, he muſt be ſo either in acting himſelf, or elſe in being diſpoſed of by ſome other; either in doing ſomething himſelf to that purpoſe, or elſe in having ſomething done upon him by ſome other to that purpoſe. What can be more plain, than that if man do nothing himſelf, and nothing be done with him or upon him by any other, he cannot be any way at all uſeful?

If man do nothing himſelf to promote the end of his exiſtence, and no other being do any thing with him to promote this end, then nothing will be done to promote this end; and ſo man muſt be wholly uſeleſs. So that there are but two ways in which man can be uſeful to any purpoſe, viz. either actively or paſſively, either in doing ſomething himſelf, or in being the ſubject of ſomething done to him.

II. Man cannot be uſeful actively, any otherwiſe than in bringing forth fruit to God, than in ſerving God, and living to his glory. This is the only way wherein he can be uſeful in doing; and that for this *reaſon*, that the glory of God is the very thing for which man was made, and to which all other ends are ſubordinate. Man is not an independent being, but he derives his being from another; and therefore hath his end aſſigned him by that other: and he that gave him his being made him for the end now mentioned. This was the very deſign and aim of the Author of man, this was the work for which he made him, viz. to ſerve and glorify his Maker.

Other creatures are made for inferior purpoſes. Inferior creatures were made for inferior purpoſes. But it is to be obſerved, that man is the creature that is higheſt, and neareſt to God, of any in this lower world; and therefore his buſineſs is with God, although other creatures are made

made for lower ends. There may be obſerved a kind of gradation, or gradual aſcent, in the order of the different kinds of creatures, from the meaneſt clod of earth to man, who hath a rational and immortal ſoul. A plant, an herb, or tree, is ſuperior in nature to a ſtone or clod, becauſe it hath a vegetable life. The brute creatures are a degree higher ſtill; for they have ſenſitive life. But man, having a rational ſoul, is the higheſt of this lower creation, and is next to God; therefore his buſineſs is with God.

Things without life, as earth, water, &c. are ſubſervient to things above them, as the graſs, herbs, and trees. Theſe vegetables are ſubſervient to that order of creatures which is next above them, the brute creation; they are for food to them. Brute-creatures, again, are made for the uſe and ſervice of the order above them; they are made for the ſervice of mankind. But man being the higheſt of this lower creation, the next ſtep from him is to God. He therefore is made for the ſervice and glory of God. This is the whole work and buſineſs of man; it is his higheſt end, to which all other ends are ſubordinate.

If it had not been for this end, there never would have been any ſuch ſort of creature as man; there would have been no occaſion for it. Other inferior ends may be anſwered as well, without any ſuch creature as man. There would have been no ſort of occaſion for making ſo noble a creature, and enduing him with ſuch faculties, only to enjoy earthly good, to eat, and to drink, and to enjoy ſenſual things. Brute-creatures, without reaſon, are capable of theſe things, as well as man: yea, if no higher end be aimed at than to enjoy ſenſitive good, reaſon is rather an hinderance than an help. It doth but render man the more capable of afflicting himſelf with care, and fears of death, and other future evils, and of vexing himſelf with many anxieties, from which brute-creatures are wholly free, and therefore can gratify their ſenſes with leſs moleſtation. Beſides, reaſon doth but make men more capable of moleſting and impeding one another in the gratification of their ſenſes. If man have no other end to ſeek but to gratify his ſenſes, reaſon is nothing but an impediment.

Therefore if man be not made to ſerve and glorify his Creator, it is wholly to no purpoſe that ſuch a creature is made. Doubtleſs then the all wiſe God, who doth all things in infinite wiſdom, hath made man for this end. And this is agreeable to what he hath taught us in many places in the ſcriptures.

ſcriptures. This is the great end for which man was made, and for which he was made ſuch a creature as he is, having a body and ſoul, bodily ſenſes and rational powers. For this is he placed in ſuch circumſtances as he is, and the earth is given him for a poſſeſſion. For this he hath dominion given him over the reſt of the creatures of this world. For this the ſun ſhines on him, and the moon and ſtars are for ſigns and ſeaſons to him, and the rain falls on him, and the earth yields him her increaſe.

All other ends of man are ſubordinate to this. There are inferior ends for which man was made. Men were made for one another; made for their friends and neighbours, and for the good of the public. But all theſe inferior ends are deſigned to be ſubordinate to the higher end of glorifying God; and therefore man cannot be actively uſeful, or actively anſwer any purpoſe, otherwiſe than by actively glorifying God or bringing forth fruit to God. Becauſe,

1. That is not actively uſeful which doth not actively anſwer its end: that which doth not anſwer its end is in vain; for that is the meaning of the propoſition, that any thing is in vain. So that which doth not actively anſwer its end, is as to its own activity in vain.

2. That is as to its own activity altogether uſeleſs which actively anſwers only ſubordinate ends, without anſwering the ultimate end; and that becauſe the ultimate end is the end of ſubordinate ends. The notion of a ſupreme end is, that it is the end of all inferior ends. Subordinate ends are to no purpoſe, only as they ſtand related to the higheſt end. The very notion of a ſubordinate end is, that it is in order to a further end. Therefore theſe inferior ends are good for nothing though they be obtained, unleſs they alſo obtain their end. Inferior ends are not aimed at for their own ſake, but only for the ſake of the ultimate end. Therefore he that fails of his great end of all, doth as much altogether fail of his end, and is as much to no purpoſe, as if he did not obtain his ſubordinate end.

I will illuſtrate this by two or three examples. The ſubordinate end of the underpinning of an houſe is to ſupport the houſe; and the ſubordinate end of the windows is to let in the light. But the ultimate end of the whole is the benefit of the inhabitants. Therefore, if the houſe be never inhabited, the whole is in vain. The underpinning is in vain, though it be ever ſo ſtrong and ſupport the building ever ſo well. The windows alſo are wholly in vain, though they be ever ſo large and clear, and though they obtain the

ſubordinate

ſubordinate end of letting in the light: they are as much in vain, as if they let in no light.

So the ſubordinate end of the huſbandman in ploughing and ſowing, and well manuring his field is, that it may bring forth a crop. But his more ultimate end is, that food may be provided for him and his family. Therefore though his inferior end be obtained, and his field bring forth ever ſo good a crop, yet if after all it be conſumed by fire, or otherwiſe deſtroyed, he ploughed and ſowed his field as much in vain, as if the ſeed had never ſprung up.

So if man obtain his ſubordinate ends ever ſo fully; yet if he altogether fail of his ultimate end, he is wholly an uſeleſs creature. Thus if men be very uſeful in temporal things to their families, or greatly promote the temporal intereſt of the neighbourhood, or of the public; yet if no glory be brought to God by it, he is altogether uſeleſs. If men actively bring no glory to God, they are, as to their own activity, altogether uſeleſs, how much ſoever they may promote the benefit of one another. How much ſoever one part of mankind may ſubſerve to another; yet if the end of the whole be not anſwered, every part is uſeleſs.

Thus if the parts of a clock ſubſerve ever ſo well one to another, mutually to aſſiſt each other in their motions; one wheel moving another ever ſo regularly; yet if the motion never reach the hand or the hammer, it is altogether in vain, as much as if it ſtood ſtill. As in a clock one wheel moves another, and that another, till at laſt the motion comes to the hand and hammer, which immediately reſpect the eye and the ear, otherwiſe all the motions are in vain; ſo it is in the world, one man was made to be uſeful to another, and one part of mankind to another; but the uſe of the whole is to bring glory to God the maker, or elſe all is in vain; and however a man may ſerve among his fellow-creatures, in a private or public capacity, upon the whole he is in vain.

It may perhaps be objected, that a wicked man may, by being ſerviceable to the public, be uſeful to many who do bring forth fruit to God, and thus glorify him.

Ans. 1. If he be ſo, he is no further uſeful than he brings glory to God. It all hath an ultimate reſpect to that glory that is brought to God, and is uſeful no further; as the motion of no one wheel of a clock is any further uſeful, than as it finally reſpects the right pointing of the hand, and ſtriking of the hammer.

Ans.

Ans. 2. When it is thus, wicked men are uſeful only accidentally and not deſignedly. Although a wicked man may, by being ſerviceable to good men, do what will be an advantage to them to their bringing forth fruit to God; yet that ſerviceableneſs is not what he aims at; this is not his end; he doth not look ſo far for an ultimate end. And however this end be obtained, no thanks are due to him; it is as to him accidental. He is only the occaſion and not the deſigning cauſe of it. That fruit which is brought forth to the glory of God, is not brought forth by him, but by others.

The uſefulneſs of ſuch a man, being not deſigned, is not to be attributed to him, as though it were his fruit. He is not uſeful *as a man*, or as a rational creature, becauſe he is not ſo deſignedly. He is uſeful as things without life may be. Things without life may be uſeful to put the godly under advantages to bring forth fruit, as the timber and ſtones with which his houſe is built, the wool and flax with which he is clothed; but the fruit which is brought forth to God's glory, cannot be ſaid for all that to be the fruit of theſe lifeleſs things, but of the godly man who makes uſe of them. So it is when wicked men put the godly under advantages to glorify God, as Cyrus, and Artaxerxes, and others have done.

III. If men bring not forth fruit to God, there is no other way in which they can be uſeful paſſively, but in being deſtroyed. They are fit for nothing elſe.

1. They are not fit to be ſuffered to continue always in this world. God ſuffers them to live for the preſent, but it is only for a certain ſeaſon. They are here in a tranſitory ſtate. It is not fit that this world ſhould be the conſtant abode of thoſe who bring forth no fruit to God. It is not fit that the barren tree ſhould be allowed always to ſtand in the vineyard. The huſbandman lets it ſtand for a while, till he digs about it, dungs it, and proves it to be incurable, or till a convenient time to cut it down come; but it is not fit that ſuch a tree ſhould ſtand here always. It is not fit that they who bring forth no fruit to God, ſhould be ſuffered to live always in a world which is ſo full of the goodneſs of God, or that his goodneſs ſhould be ſpent upon them for ever.

This world, though it is fallen, and is under a curſe, and is a miſerable place to what it once was, yet is full of the ſtreams of divine goodneſs. But it is not fit that thoſe

who bring forth no fruit to God, ſhould always be continued in partaking of theſe ſtreams. There are theſe three different ſtates; a ſtate wherein is nothing but good, which is the ſtate of the bleſſed in heaven; a ſtate wherein is a mixture of good and evil, which is the earthly ſtate; and a ſtate wherein is nothing but evil, which is the ſtate of eternal deſtruction and damnation. Now they that bring forth no fruit to God, are not fit for either of the former; it is not fit that they ſhould be continued in the enjoyment of any of the goodneſs of God.

It is not fit that an unprofitable, unfruitful creature, who will not glorify his Creator, ſhould always live here to devour the fruits of the earth, and conſume the fruits of divine bounty; to have the good things of this life, as God's wool and his flax, his corn, and wine, and oil, ſpent upon him in vain. While a man lives in this world, the other creatures of the world are ſubjected to him. The brute creatures ſerve him with their labour and with their lives. The ſun, moon, and ſtars, the clouds, fields, and trees, all ſerve him. But it is not fit that theſe creatures ſhould always be made to ſerve him, who brings forth no fruit to the Creator. Why ſhould God always keep his creatures in ſubjection to that man, who will not be ſubject to him? Why ſhould the creation be always kept in ſuch bondage, as to be ſubject to wicked men? The creatures are made ſubject to vanity for a little time; God hath ſubjected them to wicked men, and given them for their uſe. This however he would not have done, but as it is only for a little while; and the creatures can bear it through the hope of approaching deliverance; and otherwiſe it would have been intolerable. Rom. viii. 20. "For the creature was made "ſubject to vanity, not willingly, but by reaſon of him "who hath ſubjected the ſame in hope."

The creature doth, as it were, groan by reaſon of this ſubjection to wicked men, although it be but for a while. v. 22. "For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and "travaileth in pain together until now." Therefore ſurely it would be no way fit that wicked men, who do no good, and bring forth no fruit to God, ſhould live here always, to have the various creatures ſubſervient to them, as they are now. The earth can ſcarcely bear wicked men during that ſhort time for which they ſtay here, but is ready to ſpew them out. It is no way fit, therefore, that it ſhould be forced to bear them always.

Men

Men who bring forth no fruit to God are cumberers of the ground. Luke xiii. 7. "And it is not meet that they "ſhould be ſuffered to cumber the ground always." God cannot be glorified in this way of diſpoſing of unfruitful perſons. If ſuch men ſhould be ſuffered to live always in ſuch a ſtate as this, it would be ſo far from being to the glory of God, that it would be to the diſparagement of the wiſdom of God, to continue them in a ſtate ſo unſuitable for them, for ever ſpending the fruits of his bounty in vain upon them. It would alſo be a diſparagement to his juſtice; for this is a world where "all things come alike to all, and "there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked." If there were no other ſtate but this for wicked men to be in, juſtice could not poſſibly take place. It would alſo reflect upon the holineſs of God. For ever to uphold this world for an habitation of ſuch perſons, and for ever to continue the communications of his bounty and goodneſs to them, would appear as though he were diſpoſed to countenance and encourage ſin and wickedneſs.

2. If men do not bring forth fruit to God, they are not fit to be diſpoſed of in heaven. Heaven, above all others, is the moſt improper place for them. Every thing appertaining to that ſtate is unſuitable for them. The company is moſt unſuitable. The original inhabitants of that world are the angels. But what a diſagreeable union would that be, to unite wicked men and angels in the ſame ſociety? The employments of that world are unſuitable. The employments are ſerving and glorifying God. How unſuitable then would it be to plant barren trees in that heavenly paradiſe, trees that would bring forth no fruit to the divine glory? The enjoyments of heaven are unſuitable. The enjoyments are holy and ſpiritual enjoyments, the happineſs of beholding the glory of God, and praiſing his name, and the like. But theſe enjoyments are as unſuitable as can be to the carnal earthly minds of wicked men. They would be no enjoyments to them; but on the contrary would be moſt diſagreeable, and what they cannot reliſh, but entirely nauſeate.

The deſign of heaven is unſuitable to them. The deſign of God in making heaven was, that it might be a place of holy habitation, for the reward of the righteous, and not an habitation for wicked men. It would greatly reflect on the wiſdom of God to diſpoſe of wicked men there; for it would be the greateſt confuſion. But God is not the author of confuſion, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. It would be contrary to the

holineſs of God, to take wicked men ſo near to himſelf, into his glorious preſence, to dwell for ever in that part of the creation which is, as it were, his own palace, and to ſit at his table. We read in Pſal. v. 4. "Thou art not a God "that hath pleaſure in wickedneſs, neither ſhall evil dwell "with thee." Therefore it would doubtleſs be impoſſible that the end of the exiſtence of wicked men ſhould be in any wiſe anſwered by the placing of them in heaven.

IV. Men who bring forth no fruit to God, yet in ſuffering deſtruction may be uſeful. Although they be not uſeful actively, or by any thing which they do; yet they may be uſeful in what they may ſuffer; juſt as a barren tree, which is no way uſeful ſtanding in the vineyard, yet may be good fuel, and be very uſeful in the fire. God can find uſe for the moſt wicked men: he hath his uſe for veſſels of wrath as well as for veſſels of mercy; as in an houſe there is uſe for veſſels unto diſhonour, as well as for veſſels unto honour: 2 Tim. ii. 20. "In a great houſe there are "not only veſſels of gold, and of ſilver, but alſo of wood "and of earth; and ſome to honour, and ſome to diſho-"nour:" Prov. xvi. 4. "The Lord hath made all things "for himſelf; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." I ſhall briefly take notice of what ends God accompliſhes by it.

1. Unfruitful perſons are of uſe in their deſtruction for the glory of God's juſtice. It was the will of God to glorify his juſtice, as well as his mercy, on his creatures. The vindictive juſtice of God is a glorious attribute, as well as his mercy; and the glory of this attribute appears in the everlaſting deſtruction and ruin of the barren and unfruitful.

The glory of divine juſtice in the perdition of ungodly men appears wonderful and glorious in the eyes of the ſaints and angels in heaven. Hence we have an account, that they ſing praiſes to God, and extol his juſtice at the ſight of the awful judgements which he inflicts on wicked men: Rev. xvi. 5. 6. "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which "art, and waſt, and art to come, becauſe thou haſt judged "thus: for they have ſhed the blood of ſaints and pro-"phets, and thou haſt given them blood to drink; for "they are worthy:" And Rev. xix. 1. 2. "And after theſe "things I heard a great voice, ſaying, Alleluia; Salvation, "and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our "God: for true and righteous are his judgements; for he

"hath

" hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth " with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his " ſervants at her hand."

2. Unfruitful perſons in their deſtruction are of uſe for God to glorify his majeſty upon them. The awful majeſty of God remarkably appears in thoſe dreadful and amazing puniſhments which he inflicts on thoſe who riſe up againſt him, and contemn him. A ſenſe of the majeſty of an earthly prince is ſupported very much by a ſenſe of its being a dreadful thing to affront him. God glorifies his own majeſty in the deſtruction of wicked men; and herein he appears infinitely great, in that it appears to be an infinitely dreadful thing to offend him. How awful doth the majeſty of God appear in the dreadfulneſs of his anger! This we may learn to be one end of the damnation of the wicked, from Rom. ix. 22. " What if God, willing to ſhow his wrath, " and to make his power known, endured with much " long-ſuffering the veſſels of wrath fitted to deſtruction?"

It is often ſpoken of God, that he is a terrible God. It is a part of the majeſty and glory of God, that he is a terrible God. God tells Pharaoh, that for this cauſe he raiſed him up, that he might ſhow his power in him, and that his name might be declared through all the earth, in his deſtruction, Exod. ix. 15. 16., and again, chap. xiv. 17. " I " will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his hoſt, " upon his chariots, and upon his horſemen."

3. The deſtruction of the unfruitful is of uſe, to give the ſaints a greater ſenſe of their happineſs, and of God's grace to them. The wicked will be deſtroyed and tormented in the view of the ſaints, and other inhabitants of heaven. This we are taught in Rev. xiv. 10. " The ſame ſhall drink of " the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out " without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and he " ſhall be tormented with fire and brimſtone, in the pre- " ſence of the holy angels, and in the preſence of the " Lamb." And in Iſa. lxvi. 24. " And they ſhall go forth, " and look upon the carcaſſes of the men that have tranſ- " greſſed againſt me: for their worm ſhall not die, neither " ſhall their fire be quenched, and they ſhall be an abhor- " ring unto all fleſh."

When the ſaints in heaven ſhall look upon the damned in hell, it will ſerve to give them a greater ſenſe of their own happineſs, ſeeing how vaſtly different their caſe is from their own. The view of the doleful condition of the damned will make them the more prize their own bleſſedneſs.

When

When they ſhall ſee how dreadful the anger of God is, it will make them the more prize his love. They will rejoice ſo much the more that they are not the objects of God's anger, but of his favour; that they are not the ſubjects of his dreadful wrath, but are treated as his children, are taken near to him, to dwell in the everlaſting embraces of his love.

When they ſhall ſee the miſery of the damned, it will give them a greater ſenſe of the diſtinguiſhing grace and love of God to them, that God ſhould from all eternity ſet his love on them, and make ſo great a difference between them and others who are of the ſame ſpecies with them, are no worſe by nature than they, and have deſerved no worſe of God than they. When they ſhall look upon the miſery of the damned, and conſider how different their own ſtate is from theirs, and that it is only free and ſovereign grace that makes the difference, what a great ſenſe will this give them of the wonderful grace of God to them! and how will it heighten their praiſes! with how much greater admiration and exultation of ſoul will they ſing of the free and ſovereign grace of God to them!

When they ſhall look upon the damned, and ſee their miſery, how will heaven ring with the praiſes of God's juſtice towards the wicked, and his grace towards the ſaints! And with how much greater enlargement of heart will they praiſe Jeſus Chriſt, their Redeemer, that ever he was pleaſed to ſet his love upon them, his dying love! and that he ſhould ſo diſtinguiſh them as to ſpill his blood, and make his ſoul an offering, to redeem them from that ſo great miſery, and to bring them to ſuch exceeding happineſs!

With what love and ecſtacy will they ſing that ſong in Rev. v. 9. 10. "Thou art worthy: for thou waſt ſlain, and "haſt redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every "tongue, and kindred, and people, and nation; and haſt "made us unto our God kings and prieſts." One end which the apoſtle mentions why God appointed veſſels of wrath, is the more to make known the wonderfulneſs of his mercy towards the ſaints. In Rom. ix. 22. 23. there are two ends mentioned: "What if God, willing to ſhow his "wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much "long-ſuffering the veſſels of wrath fitted to deſtruction?" That is one end, then another is mentioned immediately after: "And that he might make known the riches of his "glory on the veſſels of mercy, which he had afore prepa-"red unto glory?"

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APPLICATION.

I. Hence we may learn, how juſt and righteous God is in the deſtruction of thoſe who bring forth no fruit to God. Seeing there is no other way in which they can be uſeful, or in which the end of their being can be obtained, certainly it is moſt juſt that God ſhould thus diſpoſe of them. Why ſhould God be fruſtrated of his end through their perverſeneſs? If men will not do the work for which he hath made and fitted them; if they, through a ſpirit of oppoſition and rebellion againſt God, refuſe; yet why ſhould God ſuffer himſelf to be diſappointed of his end in making them? It doth not become the infinite greatneſs and majeſty of God, to ſuffer himſelf to be diſappointed and fruſtrated by the wickedneſs and perverſeneſs of ſinful worms of the duſt. If God ſhould ſuffer this, it would ſeem to argue, either a want of wiſdom in God to fix upon a good end, or a want of power to accompliſh it.

God made all men that they might be uſeful; and if they will not be uſeful in their conduct and actions, how juſt is it that God ſhould make them uſeful in their ſufferings! God made all men for his own glory; and if they, contrary to the revealed will of God, refuſe to glorify him actively and willingly, how juſt is it that God ſhould glorify himſelf upon them in what he doth with them!

It hath been ſhown, that there is no other way wherein this can be done, but by their deſtruction. Surely, therefore, it muſt be juſt and righteous that God ſhould deſtroy them.

Men are under no natural neceſſity of being put to this uſe of glorifying God in their ſufferings. God gives them opportunity of glorifying him in doing, in bringing forth fruit, puts them under advantages for it, and uſes many means to bring them to it. But if they will not be uſeful this way, it is very juſt that God ſhould make them uſeful in the only remaining way in which they can be uſeful, viz. in their deſtruction. God is not forward to put them to this uſe. He tells us, that he hath "no pleaſure in the "death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his "way, and live;" Ezek. xxxiii. 11. God repreſents the deſtruction of ſinners as a work to which he is backward; yet it is meet that they ſhould be deſtroyed, rather than that they ſhould be ſuffered to fruſtrate God of the end of their being.

being. Who can blame the huſbandman for cutting down and burning a barren tree, after he hath digged about it, and dunged it, and uſed all proper means to make it fruitful?

Let thoſe among us conſider this, who have lived all their lives hitherto unprofitably, and never have brought forth any fruit to God's glory, notwithſtanding all the means that have been uſed with them. Conſider how juſt it would be if God ſhould utterly deſtroy you, and glorify himſelf upon you in that way; and what a wonder of patience it is, that God hath not done it before now.

II. This ſubject ought to put you upon examining yourſelves, whether you be not wholly uſeleſs creatures. You have now heard, that thoſe who bring forth no fruit to God, are, as to any good they do, wholly uſeleſs. Inquire, therefore, whether you have ever in your lives brought forth any fruit to God. Have you ever done any thing from a gracious reſpect to God, or out of love to God? By only ſeeking your worldly intereſt, you do not bring forth fruit to God. It is not bringing forth fruit to God, for you to come to public worſhip on the Sabbath, to pray in your families, and other ſuch like things, merely in compliance with the general cuſtom. It is not to bring forth fruit to God, that you be ſober, moral, and religious, only to be ſeen of men, or out of reſpect to your own credit and honour. How is that for God which is only for the ſake of cuſtom, or the eſteem of men?

It is not to bring forth fruit to God, for men to pray, and read, and hear, and to be ſtrict and diligent in religious and moral duties, merely from the fear of hell. What thanks are due to you for not loving your own miſery, and for being willing to take ſome pains to eſcape burning in hell to all eternity? There is ne'er a devil in hell, but would gladly do the ſame: Hoſ. x. 1. "Iſrael is an *empty* "vine; he bringeth forth fruit *unto himſelf.*"

There is no fruit brought forth to God, where there is nothing done in any wiſe from love to God, or from any true reſpect to him. God looketh at the heart. He doth not ſtand in need of our ſervices, neither is he benefited by any thing that we can do. He doth not receive any thing of us, becauſe it benefits him, but only as a ſuitable teſtimony of our love and reſpect to him. This is the fruit that he ſeeks. Men themſelves will not accept of thoſe ſhows of friendſhip, which they think are hypocritical, and come not

not from the heart. How much leſs ſhould God, who ſearcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men! John iv. 23. "God is a ſpirit, and they that wor-"ſhip him muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth."

Inquire, therefore, whether you ever in your lives did the leaſt thing out of love to God. Have you not done all for yourſelves? Zech. vii. 5. 6. "When ye faſted and "mourned in the fifth and ſeventh month, even thoſe "ſeventy years, did ye at all faſt unto me, even unto me? "And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did ye not "eat for yourſelves, and drink for yourſelves?"

III. Another uſe of this ſubject may be of *conviction* and *humiliation* to thoſe who never have brought forth any fruit to God. If, upon examination, you find that you have never in all your lives done any thing out of a true reſpect to God, then it hath been demonſtrated, that, as to any thing which you do, you are altogether uſeleſs creatures. And conſider, what a ſhameful thing it is for ſuch rational beings as you are, and placed under ſuch advantages for uſefulneſs, yet to be wholly uſeleſs, and to live in the world to no purpoſe!

We eſteem it a very mean character in any perſon, that he is a worthleſs inſignificant perſon; and to be called ſo is taken as a great reproach. But conſider ſeriouſly, whether you can clear yourſelves of this character. Set reaſon to work; can you rationally ſuppoſe, that you do in any meaſure anſwer the end for which God gave you your being, and made you of a nature ſuperior to the beaſts? —— But that you may be ſenſible what cauſe you have to be aſhamed of your unprofitableneſs, conſider the following things.

1. How much God hath beſtowed upon you, in the endowments of your nature. God hath made you rational, intelligent creatures, hath endued you with noble powers, thoſe endowments wherein the natural image of God conſiſts. You are vaſtly exalted in your nature above other kinds of creatures here below. You are capable of a thouſand times as much as any of the brute-creatures. He hath given you a power of underſtanding, which is capable of vaſtly extending itſelf, of looking back to the beginning of time, and of conſidering what was before the world was, and of looking forward beyond the end of time. It is capable of extending beyond the utmoſt limits of the uni-

verſe; and is a faculty whereby you are a-kin to angels, and are capable even of knowing God, of contemplating the divine Being, and his glorious perfections, manifeſted in his works and in his word. You have ſouls capable of being the habitation of the Holy Spirit of God, and his divine grace. You are capable of the noble employments of angels.

How lamentable and ſhameful is it, that ſuch a creature ſhould be altogether uſeleſs, and live in vain! How lamentable that ſuch a noble and excellent piece of divine workmanſhip ſhould fail of its end, and be to no purpoſe! Was it ever worth while for God to make you ſuch a creature, with ſuch a noble nature, and ſo much above other kinds of creatures, only to eat, and drink, and gratify your ſenſual appetites? How lamentable and ſhameful to you, that ſuch a noble tree ſhould be more uſeleſs than any tree of the foreſt; that man, whom God hath thus ſet in honour, ſhould make himſelf more worthleſs than the beaſts that periſh!

2. How much God hath done for you in the creation of the world. He made the earth, and ſeas, and all the fullneſs of them, for the uſe of man, and hath given them to him: Pſal. cxv. 16. "The earth hath he given to the chil-"dren of men." He made the vaſt variety of creatures for man's uſe and ſervice: Gen. i. 28. "Have dominion "over the fiſh of the ſea, and over the fowl of the air, "and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." For the ſame purpoſe he made all the plants, and herbs, and trees of the field: Gen. i. 29. "I have given you every "herb bearing ſeed, which is upon the face of all the earth, "and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree, yield-"ing ſeed; to you it ſhall be for meat." He made the ſun in the heavens, that glorious luminary, that wonderful globe of light, to give light to man, and to conſtitute the difference between day and night. He alſo made the moon, and the vaſt multitude of ſtars, for the uſe of man, to be to him *for ſigns and ſeaſons.*

What great proviſion hath God made for man! What a vaſt variety of good things for food, and otherwiſe to be for his convenience, to put him under advantages to be uſeful! How lamentable is it, that after all theſe things he ſhould be an uſeleſs creature in the world!

3. How much is done for you in the courſe of God's common providence! Conſider how nature is continually labouring

labouring for you. The ſun is, as it were, in a ferment for mankind, unweariedly running his courſe from year to year, and from day to day, and ſpending his rays upon man, to put him under advantage to be uſeful; every day giving him light, that he may have opportunity to behold the glorious wiſdom of God, and to ſee and ſerve God. The winds and clouds are continually labouring for you, and the waters are going in a conſtant circulation, aſcending in the air from the ſeas, deſcending in rain, gathering in ſtreams and rivers, returning to the ſea, and again aſcending and deſcending, for you. The earth is continually labouring to bring forth her fruit for your ſupport. The trees of the field are labouring and ſpending their ſtrength for you. And how many of the poor brute-creatures are continually labouring for you, and ſpending their ſtrength for you! How much of the fulneſs of the earth is ſpent upon you! How many of God's creatures are devoured by you! How many of the lives of the living creatures of God are deſtroyed for your ſake, for your ſupport and comfort!

Now, how lamentable will it be, if, after all, you be altogether uſeleſs, and live to no purpoſe! What mere cumberers of the ground will you be! agreeably to Luke, xiii. 7. Nature, which thus continually labours for you, will be burdened with you. This ſeems to be what the apoſtle means, Rom. viii. 20. 21. 22. where he tells us, that the creation is made ſubject to vanity, and brought into the bondage of corruption; and that the whole creation groans, and travails in pain, under this bondage.

4. How much is done for you in the uſe of the means of grace. How much hath God done to provide you with ſuitable means and advantages for uſefulneſs! How many prophets hath God ſent into the world, in different ages, inſpiring them with his holy ſpirit, and enabling them to work many miracles to confirm their word, whereby you now have the written word of God to inſtruct you! How great a thing hath God done for you, to give you opportunity and advantage to be uſeful, in that he hath ſent his own Son into the world! He who is really and truly God, united himſelf to the human nature, and became man, to be a prophet and teacher to you and other ſinners. Yea, he laid down his life to make atonement for ſin, that you might have encouragement to ſerve God with hopes of acceptance.

How many ordinances have been inſtituted for you! How much of the labour of the miniſters of God hath been ſpent upon you! Is not that true concerning you which is written in Iſa. v. at the beginning, concerning the vineyard planted in a very fruitful hill, and fenced and cultivated with peculiar care and pains, which yet proved unfruitful? How much hath the dreſſer of the vineyard digged about the barren tree, and dunged it, and yet it remains barren!

5. Conſider what a ſhame it is that you ſhould live in vain, when all the other creatures, that are inferior to you, do glorify their Creator, according to their nature. You who are ſo highly exalted in the world, are more uſeleſs than the brute-creation; yea, than the meaneſt worms, or things without life, as earth and ſtones: For they all do anſwer their end, in the way in which nature hath fitted them for it; none of them fail of it. They are all uſeful in their places, all render their proper tribute of praiſe to their Creator; while you are mere nuiſances in the creation, and burdens to the earth; as any tree of the foreſt is more uſeful than the vine, if it bear not fruit.

IV. Let me, in a farther application of this doctrine, *exhort* you by all means to bring forth fruit to God. Let it be your conſtant endeavour to be in this way actively uſeful in the world.——Here conſider three things.

1. What an honour it will be to ſuch poor creatures as you are, to bring forth fruit to the divine glory. What is ſuch a poor worm as man, that he ſhould be enabled to bring forth any fruit to God! It is the greateſt honour of the nature of man, that God hath given him a capacity of glorifying the great Creator. It is what no other creature in this lower world can do, in the ſame manner as man. There is no creature in the viſible world that is capable of actively glorifying God, but man.

2. In bringing forth fruit to God, you will be ſo profitable to none as to yourſelves; you cannot thereby be profitable to God: Job xxii. 2. "Can a man be profitable to "God?" You may thereby be profitable to your fellow-creatures; yet not ſo much as to yourſelves. The fruit which you bring forth to God will be a greater benefit to yourſelves than to any one living. You will be more uſeful to yourſelves than to any one elſe.

Although you are under a natural obligation to bring forth

forth fruit to God, yet God doth not require it of you without a reward. He will richly reward you for it. In requiring you to bring forth fruit to him, he doth but require you to bring forth fruit to your own happineſs. You will taſte the ſweetneſs of your own fruit. It will be moſt profitable for you in this world to bring forth fruit to God; it will be exceedingly to your benefit while here. It will be pleaſant to you to lead a fruitful and holy life; the pleaſure will be beyond the labour. Beſide this, God hath promiſed to ſuch a life everlaſting rewards, unſpeakable, infinite benefits. So that by it you will infinitely advance your own intereſt.

3. If you remain thus unprofitable, and be not actively uſeful, ſurely God will obtain his end of you, in your deſtruction. He will ſay concerning the barren tree, "Cut "it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" Chriſt, in John, xv. 6. tell us, "If a man abide not in me, he is caſt "forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather "them, and caſt them into the fire, and they are burned." This is ſpoken of the barren branches in the vine. How would you yourſelves do in ſuch a caſe with a barren tree in an orchard, or with weeds and tares in your fields? Doubtleſs, if it were in your power, you would utterly deſtroy them.

God will have his end; he will accompliſh it. As it is not meet that God ſhould be fruſtrated, ſo he will not be fruſtrated. Though all men and devils unite their endeavours, they cannot fruſtrate God in any thing; and "tho' "hand join in hand, the wicked ſhall not be unpuniſhed;" Prov. xi. 21. God hath ſworn by his great name, that he will have his glory of men, whether they will actively glorify him or no. Numb. xiv. 21. 22. 23. "But as tru-"ly as I live, all the earth ſhall be filled with the glory "of the Lord. Becauſe all thoſe men which have ſeen "my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt and "in the wilderneſs, and have tempted me now theſe "ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; ſurely "they ſhall not ſee the land which I ſware unto their "fathers, neither ſhall any of them that provoked me, "ſee it."

"The ax lieth at the root of the trees; and every tree "which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and "caſt into the fire;" Matth. iii. 10. The end of thoſe men who bring forth nothing but briers and thorns is to be burned,

ed, as in Heb. vi. 7. 8. "For the earth which drinketh in "the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth "herbs meet for them by whom it is dreſſed, receiveth bleſ- "ſing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers, "is rejected, and is nigh unto curſing; whoſe end is to be "burned." So we read of the tares, Matth. xiii. 30. "Let "both grow together until the harveſt; and in the time of "harveſt I will ſay to the reapers, Gather ye together "firſt the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them;" and in verſ. 40. 41. 42. "As therefore the tares are gathered "and burned in the fire, ſo ſhall it be at the end of the "world. The Son of man ſhall ſend forth his angels, and "they ſhall gather out of his kingdom all things that of- "fend, and them which do iniquity, and ſhall caſt them "into a furnace of fire: there ſhall be wailing and gnaſh- "ing of teeth."

So it is ſaid of the chaff, Matth. iii. 12. "Whoſe fan is "in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and "gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up "the chaff with unquenchable fire."

If you continue not to bring forth any fruit to the di- vine glory, as you have hitherto done, hell will be the only fit place for you. It is a place prepared on purpoſe to be a receptacle of ſuch perſons. In hell nature ceaſes to labour any more for ſinners: the ſun doth not run his courſe to ſhine upon them, the earth doth not bring forth her fruits to be conſumed upon them there. There they will have no opportunity to conſume the fruits of divine goodneſs on their luſts. In hell they can prejudice or incumber no- thing, upon which God ſets any value. There the faithful ſervants and miniſters of God will no longer ſpend their ſtrength in vain upon them. When the barren tree is in the fire, the ſervants of the huſbandman are freed from any further labour or toil in digging about it, and manu- ring it.

In hell they will no more have opportunity to clog and diſ- courage the flouriſhing of religion, and to deſtroy much good, as they often do in this world. In hell they will no more have opportunity to corrupt others by their ill example. In hell they will no more have it in their power to offend the godly; they may hurt and torment one another; but the godly will be out of their reach. In hell there will be no ordinances, no Sabbaths, no ſacraments, no ſacred things, for them to profane and defile by their careleſs and hypo- critical attendance.

Hell

Hell therefore, if you remain unfruitful and cumberers of the ground, will be the fitteſt place for you, and there you will ſurely have your portion aſſigned you. There God will get himſelf honour upon you; there he will magnify himſelf in your ruin, in the preſence of the holy angels and in the preſence of the Lamb; and will be praiſed upon that account by the ſaints, at the day of judgement; and by all the hoſt of heaven throughout everlaſting ages.

SER-

SERMON XIX.

The Fearfulneſs, which will hereafter ſurpriſe Sinners in Zion, repreſented and improved.

ISAIAH, xxxiii. 14.

The ſinners in Zion are afraid: fearfulneſs hath ſurpriſed the hypocrites: Who among us ſhall dwell with the devouring fire? Who amongſt us ſhall dwell with everlaſting burnings?

THERE are two kinds of perſons among God's profeſſing people; the one is thoſe who are truly godly, who are ſpoken of in the verſe following the text; "He that walketh "righteouſly, and ſpeaketh uprightly," &c. The other kind conſiſts of ſinners in Zion, or hypocrites. It is to be obſerved, that the prophet in this chapter ſpeaks interchangeably, firſt to the one, and then to the other of theſe characters of men; awfully threatening and denouncing the wrath of God againſt the one, and comforting the other with gracious promiſes. Thus you may obſerve, in the 5th and 6th verſes, there are comfortable promiſes to the godly; then in the eight following verſes, awful judgements are threatened againſt the ſinners in Zion. Again, in the two next verſes are bleſſed promiſes to the ſincerely godly, and in the former part of verſ. 17. And then in the latter part of verſ. 17. and in verſ. 18. and 19. are terrible threatenings to ſinners in Zion: then in the verſes that follow are gracious promiſes to the godly.

Our text is part of what is ſaid in this chapter to ſinners in Zion. In verſ. 10. it is ſaid, "Now will I riſe, ſaith the "Lord; now will I be exalted, now will I lift up myſelf." i. e. Now will I ariſe to execute wrath upon the ungodly; I will not let them alone any longer. They ſhall ſee that I

* Dated December 1740.

am

am not aſleep, and that I am not regardleſs of mine own honour. "Now will I be exalted." Though they have caſt contempt upon me, yet I will vindicate the honour of my own majeſty: I will exalt myſelf, and ſhow my greatneſs, and my awful majeſty in their deſtruction. "Now "will I lift up myſelf;" now I will no longer have mine honour to be trampled in the duſt by them: But my glory ſhall be manifeſted in their miſery.

In verſ. 11. the prophet proceeds, "Ye ſhall conceive "chaff, ye ſhall bring forth ſtubble:" i. e. Ye ſhall purſue happineſs in ways of wickedneſs, but you ſhall not obtain it; you are as ground which brings forth no fruit, as if only chaff were ſowed in it; it brings forth nothing but ſtubble, which is fit for nothing but to be burned.

It ſeems to have been the manner in that land where the corn grew very rank, when they had reaped the wheat, and gathered it off from the ground, to ſet fire to the ſtubble; which is alluded to here; and therefore it is added, "Your "breath, as fire, ſhall devour you:" i. e. Your own wicked ſpeeches, your wickedneſs that you commit with your breath, or with your tongues, ſhall ſet fire to the ſtubble and devour it.

Then it follows in verſ. 12. "And the people ſhall be as "the burnings of lime." As they are wont to burn lime in a great and exceeding fierce fire, till ſtones, and bones, and other things are burnt to lime; ſo ſhall the wicked be burnt in the fire of God's wrath. "As thorns cut up "ſhall they be burnt in the fire:" as briers and thorns are the incumbrance and curſe of the ground where they grow, and are wont to be burnt; ſo ſhall it be with the wicked that are among God's people, and grow in God's field. Heb. vi. 7. 8. "For the earth which drinketh in "the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth "herbs meet for them by whom it is dreſſed, receiveth "bleſſing from God: but that which beareth thorns and "briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto curſing; whoſe end "is to be burned."

Then it follows in verſ. 13. "Hear ye that are far off, "what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge "my might." This implies that God will, by the deſtruction of ungodly men, manifeſt his glory very publicly, even in the ſight of the whole world, both in the ſight of thoſe that are near, and of thoſe that are far off. "Acknowledge "my might." Which implies that God will execute wrath upon ungodly men, in ſuch a manner as extraordinarily to

ſhow forth his great and mighty power. The deſtruction and miſery of the wicked will be ſo dreadful, that it will be a dreadful manifeſtation of the omnipotent power of God, that he can execute ſo dreadful miſery; agreeably to Rom. ix. 22. "What if God, willing to ſhow his wrath, "and to make his power known, endured with much long-"ſuffering the veſſels of wrath fitted to deſtruction."

Next follow the words of the text: "The ſinners in "Zion are afraid? fearfulneſs hath ſurpriſed the hypo-"crites: who among us ſhall dwell with the devouring "fire? who amongſt us ſhall dwell with everlaſting bur-"nings?" The ſenſe of the text is, That the time will come, when fearfulneſs will ſurpriſe the ſinners in Zion; becauſe they will know, that they are about to be caſt into a devouring fire, which they muſt ſuffer for ever and ever, and which none can endure. This I ſhall make the ſubject of my preſent diſcourſe; and ſhall particularly ſpeak upon this ſubject,

1. By inquiring, who are ſinners in Zion?

2. By ſhowing how fearfulneſs will hereafter ſurpriſe them.

3. By inſiſting on thoſe reaſons of this fear and ſurpriſe, which are mentioned in the text.

4. By ſhowing why ſinners *in Zion* will be eſpecially ſurpriſed with fear.

I. It may be inquired, who are the ſinners in Zion?—— I anſwer, That they are thoſe who are in a natural condition among the viſible people of God. Zion, or the city of David of old, was a type of the church; and the church of God in ſcripture is perhaps more frequently called by the name of Zion than by any other name. And commonly by Zion is meant the true church of Chriſt, or the inviſible church of true ſaints. But ſometimes by this name is meant the viſible church, conſiſting of thoſe who are outwardly, by profeſſion and external privileges, the people of God. This is intended by Zion in this text.

The greater part of the world are ſinners: Chriſt's flock is, and ever hath been but a little flock. And the ſinners of the world are of two ſorts: there are thoſe that are viſibly of Satan's kingdom, who are without the pale of the viſible church. Such are all who do not profeſs the true religion, nor attend the external ordinances of it. Beſide theſe there are the ſinners in Zion. Both are the objects of the diſpleaſure and wrath of God; but his wrath is more

eſpecially

eſpecially manifeſted in ſcripture againſt the latter. Sinners in Zion will have by far the loweſt place in hell. They are exalted neareſt to heaven in this world, and they will be loweſt in hell in another. The ſame is meant in the text by hypocrites, as ſinners in Zion. Sinners in Zion are all hypocrites; for they make a profeſſion of the true religion; they attend God's ordinances, and make a ſhow of being the worſhippers of God; but all is in hypocriſy. ——I now haſten, as was propoſed,

II. To ſhow how fearfulneſs will hereafter ſurpriſe ſinners in Zion.

1. They will hereafter be afraid. Now many of them ſeem to have little or no fear. They are quiet and ſecure. Nothing will awaken them: the moſt awful threatenings and the loudeſt warnings do not much move them. They are not ſo much moved with them, but that they can eat, and drink, and ſleep, and go about their worldly concerns without much diſturbance. But the time will come, when the hardeſt and moſt ſtupid wretches will be awakened. Though now preaching will not awaken them, and the death of others will not make them afraid; though ſeeing others awakened and converted will not much affect them; though they can ſtand all that is to be heard and ſeen in a time of general out-pouring of the Spirit of God, without being much moved; yet the time will come, when they will be awakened, and fear will take hold of them. They will be afraid of the wrath of God: however ſenſeleſs they be now, they will hereafter be ſenſible of the awful greatneſs of God, and that it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands.

2. They will be *ſurpriſed* with fear. This ſeems to imply two things; viz. the greatneſs of their fear, and the ſuddenneſs of it.

(1.) The greatneſs of their fear. Surpriſe argues an high degree of fear. Their fears will be to the degree of aſtoniſhment. Some of the ſinners in Zion are ſomewhat afraid now: They now and then have ſome degree of fear. They are not indeed convinced that there is ſuch a place as hell; but they are afraid there is. They are not thoroughly awakened; neither are they quite eaſy. They have at certain times inward moleſtations from their conſciences; but they have no ſuch degrees of fear, as to put them upon any thorough endeavours to eſcape future wrath.

However, hereafter they will have fear enough, as much,

and a great deal more than they will be able to ſtand under. Their fear will be to the degree of horror; they will be horribly afraid; and terrors will take hold on them as waters. Thus we read of "their fear coming as a deſolation, "and of diſtreſs and anguiſh coming upon them;" Prov. i. 27. It is alſo very emphatically ſaid of the wicked, that "trouble and anguiſh ſhall prevail againſt him, as a king "ready to the battle." Job xv. 24.

The ſtouteſt heart of them all will then melt with fear. The hearts of thoſe who are of a ſturdy ſpirit, and perhaps ſcorn to own themſelves afraid of any man, and are even aſhamed to own themſelves afraid of the wrath of God, will then become as weak as water, as weak as the heart of a little child. And the moſt reſerved of them will not be able to hide his fears. Their faces will turn pale; they will appear with amazement in their countenances; every joint in them will tremble; all their bones will ſhake; and their knees will ſmite one againſt another: nor will they be able to refrain from crying out with fear and rending the air with the moſt diſmal ſhrieks.

(2.) They will be ſuddenly ſeized with fear. The ſinners in Zion often remain ſecure, till they are ſurpriſed, as with a cry at midnight. They will be, as it were, awakened out of their ſecure ſleep in a diſmal fright. They will ſee an unexpected calamity coming upon them; far more dreadful than they were aware of, and coming at an unexpected ſeaſon.

With reſpect to the time when the wicked ſhall be thus ſurpriſed with fear;

1. It is often ſo on a deathbed. Many things paſs in their lifetime, which one would think might well ſtrike terror into their ſouls; as when they ſee others die, who are as young as they, and of like condition and circumſtances with themſelves, whereby they may ſee how uncertain their lives are, and how unſafe their ſouls. It may well ſurpriſe many ſinners, to conſider how old they are grown, and are yet in a Chriſtleſs ſtate; how much of their opportunity to get an intereſt in Chriſt is irrecoverably gone, and how little remains; alſo how much greater their diſadvantages now are, than they have been. But theſe things do not terrify them: as age increaſes, ſo do the hardneſs and ſtupidity of their hearts grow upon them.

But when death comes, then the ſinner is often filled with aſtoniſhment. It may be, when he is firſt taken ſick, he has great hope that he ſhall recover; as men are ready

to

to flatter themſelves with hopes, that things will be as they fain would have them. But when the diſtemper comes to prevail much upon him, and he ſees that he is going into eternity; when he ſees that all the medicines of phyſicians are in vain, that all the care and endeavours of friends are to no purpoſe, that nothing ſeems to help him, that his ſtrength is gone, that his friends weep over him, and look upon his caſe as deſperate; when he ſees, by the countenance and behaviour of the phyſician, that he looks upon his caſe as paſt hope, and perhaps overhears a whiſpering in the room, wherein his friends ſignify one to another, that they look upon it that he is ſtruck with death, or wherein they tell one another, that his extreme parts grow cold, that his countenance and manner of breathing, and his pulſe, ſhow death, and that he begins to be in a cold death-ſweat; and when perhaps, by and by, ſome one thinks himſelf bound in duty and faithfulneſs to let him know the worſt, and therefore comes and aſks him whether or no he be ſenſible that he is a-dying:—then how doth fearfulneſs ſurpriſe the ſinner in Zion. How doth his heart melt with fear! This is the thing which he feared ever ſince he was taken ſick; but till now he had hope that he ſhould recover. The phyſician did not ſpeak; or if he deſpaired, he ſpoke of ſuch and ſuch medicines as being very proper; and he hoped that they would be effectual; and when theſe failed, he changed his medicines, and applied ſomething new: then the ſinner hoped that that would be effectual. Thus, although he conſtantly grew worſe and worſe, ſtill he hoped to recover.

At the ſame time he cried to God to ſpare him, and made promiſes how he would live, if God would ſpare him; and he hoped that God would hear him. He obſerved alſo, that his friends, and perhaps the miniſter, ſeemed to pray earneſtly for him; and he could not but hope that thoſe prayers would be anſwered, and he ſhould be reſtored. But now how doth his heart ſink and die within him! how doth he look about with a frighted countenance! how quick is the motion of his eye, through inward fear! and how quick and ſudden are all his motions! what a frightful hurry doth he ſeem to be in! How doth every thing look to him when he ſees pale grim death ſtaring him in the face, and a vaſt eternity within a few hours or minutes of him!

It may be, he ſtill ſtruggles for a little hope; he is loth to believe what is told him; he tells thoſe who tell him

him that he is a-dying, that he hopes not; he hopes that they are more affrighted than they need be; he hopes that thoſe ſymptoms ariſe from ſome other cauſe; and, like a poor drowning man, he catches at ſlender and brittle twigs, and clinches his hands about whatever he ſees within his reach.

But as death creeps more and more on him, he ſees his twigs break, all his hopes of life fail, and he ſees he muſt die. O! there is nothing but death before him! He hath been hoping; but his hopes are all daſhed; he ſees this world, and all that belongs to it, are gone. Now come the thoughts of hell into his mind with amazement. O! how ſhall he go out of the world? He knows he hath no intereſt in Chriſt; his ſins ſtare him in the face. O the dreadful gulph of eternity! He had been crying to God, perhaps ſince he was ſick, to ſave him; and he had ſome hope, if it were his laſt ſickneſs, that yet God would pity him, and give him pardoning grace before he ſhould die. He begged and pleaded, and he hoped that God would have pity on his poor ſoul. At the ſame time he aſked others to pray for him, and he had been looking day after day for ſome light to ſhine into his ſoul. But, alas! now he is a-dying, and his friends aſk him, how death appears to him? whether any light appear? whether God have not given him ſome token of his favour? and he anſwers, No, with a poor, faultering, trembling voice, if he able to ſpeak at all: Or if his friends aſk a ſignal of hope, he can give none.

Now death comes on him more and more, and he is juſt on the brink of eternity. Who can expreſs the fear, the miſgivings, the hangings back, and the horrible fright and amazement, that his ſoul is the ſubject of? Some who, in ſuch circumſtances, have been able to ſpeak, have been known to cry out, *O eternity! eternity!* and ſome, *O! a thouſand worlds for an inch of time! O if they might but live a little while longer!* But it muſt not be; go they muſt. They feel the frame of nature diſſolving, and perceive the ſoul is juſt a-going; for ſometimes the exerciſe of reaſon ſeems to hold to the laſt.

What, in ſuch a caſe, is felt in the ſoul, in thoſe laſt moments, when it is juſt breaking its bands with the body, about to fetch its leap, and is on the edge of eternity, and the very brink of hell, without any Saviour, or the leaſt teſtimony of divine mercy: I ſay, what is ſometimes felt by Chriſtleſs

Chriſtleſs ſouls in theſe moments, none can tell; nor is it within the compaſs of our conception.

2. The miſery of the departed ſoul of a ſinner, beſides what it now feels, conſiſts in a great part in amazing fears of what is yet to come. When the union of the ſoul and body is actually broken, and the body has fetched its laſt gaſp, the ſoul forſakes its old habitation, and then falls into the hands of devils, who fly upon it, and ſeize it more violently than ever hungry lions flew upon their prey. And with what horror will it fall into thoſe cruel hands!

If we imagine to ourſelves the dreadful fear with which a lamb or kid falls into the paws of a wolf, which lays hold of it with open mouth; or if we imagine to ourſelves the feeling of a little child, that hath been purſued by a lion, when it is taken hold of, and ſees the terrible creature open his devouring jaws to tear it in pieces; or the feeling of thoſe two and forty children, who were curſed by Eliſha, when they fell into the paws of the bears that tare them in pieces: I ſay, if we could have a perfect idea of that terror and aſtoniſhment which a little child has in ſuch a caſe, yet we ſhould have but a faint idea of what is felt in the departing ſoul of a ſinner, when it falls into the hands of thoſe cruel devils, thoſe roaring lions, which then lay hold of it!

And when the poor ſoul is carried to hell, and there is tormented, and ſuffers the wrath of the Almighty, and is overwhelmed and cruſhed with it, it will alſo be amazed with the apprehenſions of what ſhall yet remain. To think of an eternity of this torment remaining, O how will it fill, and overbear, and ſink down the poor ſoul! How will the thought of the duration of this torment without end cauſe the heart to melt like wax! How will the thought of it ſink the ſoul into the bottomleſs pit of darkneſs and gloominеſs! Even thoſe proud and ſturdy ſpirits, the devils, do tremble at the thoughts of that greater torment which they are to ſuffer at the day of judgement. So will the poor damned ſouls of men. They will already have vaſtly more than they will be able to bear: how then will they tremble at the thought of having their miſery ſo vaſtly augmented!

Perſons ſometimes in this world are afraid of the day of judgement. If there be an earthquake, or if there be more than common thunder and lightning, or if there be ſome unuſual light in the heavens, their hearts are ready to tremble for fear that the day of judgement is at hand. O how then do the poor ſouls in hell fear it, who know ſo much

much more about it, who know by what they feel already, and know certainly, that whenever it comes they ſhall ſtand on the left hand of the Judge, to receive the dreadful ſentence; and that then they, in both ſoul and body, muſt enter into thoſe everlaſting burnings which are prepared for the devil and his angels, and who probably know that their miſery is to be an hundred fold greater than it is now.

3. Fearfulneſs will ſurpriſe them at the laſt judgement. When Chriſt ſhall appear in the clouds of heaven, and the laſt trumpet ſhall ſound, then will the hearts of wicked men be ſurpriſed with fearfulneſs. The poor damned ſoul, in expectation of it, trembles every day and every hour from the time of its departure from the body. It knows not, indeed, when it is to be, but it knows it *is* to be. But when the alarm is given in hell, that the day is come, it will be a dreadful alarm indeed. It will, as it were, fill the caverns of hell with ſhrieks; and when the ſouls of the damned ſhall enter into their bodies, it will be with amazing horror of what is coming. And when they ſhall lift up their heads out of their graves, and ſhall ſee the Judge, it will be a moſt terrible ſight. Gladly would they return into their graves again, and hide themſelves there, if that might be; and gladly would they return into hell, their former ſtate of miſery, to hide themſelves from this awful ſight, if that would excuſe them.

So thoſe ſinners in Zion, who ſhall then be found alive on the earth, when they ſhall ſee this ſight, will be ſurpriſed with fearfulneſs. The fear and horror which many poor ſinners feel when they are dying, is great, and beyond all that we can have any idea of; but that is nothing to the horror that will ſeize them when they ſhall come to ſee this ſight.

There will not be a wicked man upon earth who will be able to bear it, let him be who he will, let him be rich or poor, old or young, male or female, ſervant or maſter, king or ſubject, learned or unlearned, let him be ever ſo proud, ever ſo courageous, and ever ſo ſturdy. There is not one who will be able at all to ſupport himſelf; when he ſhall ſee this ſight, it will immediately ſink his ſpirit; it will looſe the joints of his loins; it will make his countenance more ghaſtly than death. The rich captains, and valiant generals and princes, who now ſcorn to ſhow any fear at the face of any enemy, who ſcorn to tremble at the roaring of cannon, will tremble and ſhriek when they ſhall hear the laſt

laſt trumpet, and ſee the majeſty of their Judge: it will make their teeth to chatter, and make them cry out, and fly to hide themſelves in the caves and rocks of mountains, crying to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and cover them from the wrath of the Judge.

Fearfulneſs will ſurpriſe them when they ſhall be dragged before the judgement-ſeat. The wicked hang back when they are about to meet death; but in no meaſure as they will hang back when they come to meet their great Judge. And when they come to ſtand before the Judge, and are put on his left hand, fearfulneſs and amazement will ſurpriſe them. The majeſty of the Judge will be intolerable to them. His pure and holy eye, which will behold and ſearch them, and pierce them through, will be more terrible to their ſouls a thouſand times than flaſhes of lightning piercing their hearts. There will they ſtand in a trembling expectation, that by and by they ſhall hear the words of that dreadful ſentence proceed out of the mouth of Chriſt: they will have an horrible expectation of that ſentence; and what ſhall they do, whither ſhall they fly, ſo as to be out of the hearing of it? They cannot ſhut their ears, ſo as not to hear it.

Fearfulneſs will ſurpriſe them when the ſentence ſhall come to be pronounced. At the cloſe of the judgement, that dreadful doom will be uttered by the Judge; and it will be the moſt terrible voice that ever was heard. The ſound of the laſt trumpet, that ſhall call men to judgement, will be a more terrible ſound to wicked men than ever they ſhall have heard till that time. But the ſound of the laſt ſentence will be much more terrible than that. There will not be one of all thoſe millions at the left hand, whether high or low, king or ſubject, who will be able to ſupport himſelf at all under the ſound of that ſentence; but they will all ſink under it.

Laſtly, Fearfulneſs will ſurpriſe them, when they ſhall come to ſee the fire kindle upon the world, in which they are to be tormented for ever. When the ſentence ſhall have been pronounced, Chriſt, with his bleſſed ſaints and glorious angels, will leave this lower world, and aſcend into heaven. Then will the flames begin to kindle, and fire will probably be ſeen coming down from heaven; and ſoon will the fire lay hold of that accurſed multitude. Then will their hearts be ſurpriſed with fearfulneſs; that fire will appear a dreadful fire indeed. O what chatterings of teeth, what ſhakings of loins, what diſtortions of body, will there

be at that time, when they ſhall ſee, and begin to feel, the fierceneſs of the flames! What ſhall they do, whither ſhall they go, to avoid thoſe flames? Where ſhall they hide themſelves? If they creep into holes, or creep into caves of the earth, yea if they could creep down to the centre of the earth, it will be in vain; for it will ſet on fire the bottoms of the mountains, and burn to the loweſt hell. They will ſee no place to fly to, no place to hide themſelves.

Then their hearts will be filled with fearfulneſs, and will utterly ſink in deſpair. Thus it ſhall hereafter be with every one that ſhall then be found to be a ſinner, and eſpecially with ſinners in Zion.

SER.

SERMON XX.

The Fearfulneſs, which will hereafter ſurpriſe Sinners in Zion, repreſented and improved.

ISAIAH, xxxiii. 14.

The ſinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulneſs hath ſurpriſed the hypocrites: Who among us ſhall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among ſt us ſhall dwell with everlaſting burnings?

IN ſpeaking upon theſe words, four things were propoſed to be done.

1. To ſhow who are meant by ſinners in Zion.
2. To ſhow how fearfulneſs will hereafter ſurpriſe them.
3. To conſider thoſe reaſons of the fear and ſurpriſe of ſinners ſpoken of in the text. And,
4. To ſhow why ſinners *in Zion* will be eſpecially ſurpriſed with fearfulneſs.

I have already finiſhed what I propoſed to ſay under the two former of theſe heads; therefore I come now,

III. To conſider thoſe reaſons ſpoken of in the text, why ſinners in Zion will hereafter be thus ſurpriſed with fear.

1. Fearfulneſs will ſurpriſe them, becauſe they will know that they are to be caſt into devouring fire. There is nothing which ſeems to give one a more terrible idea of torment and miſery, than to think of being caſt alive into a fire; eſpecially if we conceive of the ſenſes remaining quick, and not benumbed by the fire. The wicked will hereafter have that to make them afraid, that they are not only to be caſt into a fire, but into devouring fire, which implies, that it will be a fire of extraordinary fierceneſs of heat, and before which nothing can ſtand.

The fire into which men are to be caſt is called a *furnace of fire.* Furnaces are contrived for an extreme degree of heat, this being neceſſary for the purpoſes for which they are deſigned, as the running and refining of metals, and the melting of things into glaſs. The fire of ſuch earthly furnaces may be called *devouring fire,* as the heat of ſome of them is ſuch, that in them even ſtones will preſently be diſſolved. Now, if a perſon ſhould be brought to the mouth of ſuch a furnace, and there ſhould ſee how the fire glows, ſo as preſently to make every thing caſt into it, all over white and bright with fire, and at the ſame time ſhould know that he was immediately to be caſt into this furnace, would not fearfulneſs ſurpriſe him?

In ſome heathen countries, the manner of diſpoſing of dead bodies is to dig a great pit, to put in it a great quantity of fuel, to put the dead bodies on the pile, and to ſet it on fire. This is ſome image of the burning of dead ſouls in the pit of hell. Now, if a perſon were brought to the edge of ſuch a pit, all filled with glowing flames, to be immediately caſt into it, would it not ſurpriſe the heart with fearfulneſs?

The flames of a very great fire, as when an houſe is all on fire, give one ſome idea of the fierceneſs of the wrath of God: ſuch is the rage of the flames. And we ſee that the greater a fire is, the fiercer is its heat in every part; and the reaſon is, becauſe one part heats another. The heat in a particular place, beſides the heat which proceeds out of the fuel in that place, is increaſed by the additional heat of the fire all around it. Hence we may conceive ſomething of what fierceneſs that fire will be, when this viſible world ſhall be turned into one great furnace. That will be devouring fire indeed. Such will be the heat of it, that, as the apoſtle ſays, "the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat," 2 Pet. iii. 10.

Men can artificially raiſe ſuch a degree of heat with burning glaſſes, as will quickly melt the very ſtones and ſand. And it is probable that the heat of that great fire which will burn the world, will be ſuch as to melt the rocks, and the very ground, and turn them into a kind of liquid fire: ſo that the whole world will probably be converted into a great lake, or liquid globe of fire, a vaſt ocean of fire, in which the wicked ſhall be overwhelmed. It will be an ocean of fire, which will always be in a tempeſt, in which the wicked ſhall be toſſed to and fro, having no reſt day nor night

vaſt

vaſt waves or billows of fire continually rolling over their heads.

But all this will be only an image of that dreadful fire of the wrath of God, which the wicked ſhall at the ſame time ſuffer in their ſouls. We read in Rev. xix. 15. of "the "fierceneſs and wrath of Almighty God." This is an extraordinary expreſſion, carrying a terrible idea of the future miſery of the wicked. If it had been only ſaid the wrath of God, that would have expreſſed what is dreadful. If the wrath of a king be as the roaring of a lion, what is the wrath of God? But it is not only ſaid the wrath of God, but *the fierceneſs and wrath of God*, or the rage of his wrath; and not only ſo, but the fierceneſs and wrath of *Almighty* God O what is that! the fierceneſs and rage or fury of Omnipotence! of a Being of infinite ſtrength! What an idea doth that give of the ſtate of thoſe worms that ſuffer the fierceneſs and wrath of ſuch an Almighty Being! And is it any wonder that fearfulneſs ſurpriſes their hearts, when they ſee this about to be executed upon them?

2. Another reaſon given in the text, why fearfulneſs will hereafter ſurpriſe ſinners, is, that they will be ſenſible that this devouring fire will be everlaſting. If a man were brought to the mouth of a great furnace, to be caſt into the midſt of it, if at the ſame time he knew he ſhould ſuffer the torment of it but for one minute, yet that minute would be ſo terrible to him, that fearfulneſs would ſurpriſe and aſtoniſh him. How much more, if he were to be caſt into a fire ſo much fiercer, as the fire in which wicked men are hereafter to be tormented! how much more terrible would the minute's ſuffering be!

But if the thought of ſuffering this devouring fire for one minute would be enough to fill one with ſuch ſurpriſing fearfulneſs, what fearfulneſs will ſeize them, when they ſhall know that they are to bear it, not for one minute, nor for one day, nor for one year, nor for one age, nor for two ages, nor for an hundred ages, nor for ten thouſand or million ages, one after another, but for ever and ever, without any end at all, and never, never be delivered!

They ſhall know, that the fire itſelf will be everlaſting fire, fire that never ſhall be quenched: Mark ix. 43. 44. "To go into hell, into the fire that never ſhall be quench-"ed; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not "quenched." And they ſhall know that their torment in that

that fire never will have an end, Rev. xiv. 10. 11. They ſhall know that they ſhall for ever be full of quick ſenſe within and without; their heads, their eyes, their tongues, their hands, their feet, their loins, and their vitals, ſhall for ever be full of glowing melting fire, fierce enough to melt the very rocks and elements; and alſo that they ſhall eternally be full of the moſt quick and lively ſenſe to feel the torment.

They ſhall know that they ſhall never ceaſe reſtleſsly to plunge and roll in that mighty ocean of fire. They ſhall know that thoſe billows of fire, which are greater than the greateſt mountains, will never ceaſe to roll over them, are following another for ever and ever.

At the ſame time they will have a more lively ſenſe of eternity than we ever can have here. We can have but a little ſenſe of what an eternal duration is; and indeed none can comprehend it; it ſwallows up all thought and imagination: if we ſet ourſelves to think upon it, we are preſently loſt. But they will have another and far clearer ſenſe of it than we have. O how vaſt will eternity appear to them, when they think of ſpending it in ſuch burnings! This is another reaſon that fearfulneſs will ſurpriſe them. The thoughts of eternity will always amaze them, and will ſink and depreſs them to a bottomleſs depth of deſpair.

3. The third reaſon given in the text, why fearfulneſs will ſurpriſe them at the apprehenſion of this puniſhment, is, that they will know that they ſhall not be able to bear it. When they ſhall ſee themſelves going into that devouring fire, they will know that they are not able to bear it. They will know that they are not able to grapple with the fierceneſs and rage of thoſe flames; for they will ſee the fierceneſs of the wrath of God in them; they will ſee an awful manifeſtation of Omnipotence in the fury of that glowing furnace. And in thoſe views their hearts will utterly fail them; their hands will not be ſtrong, nor their hearts endure. They will ſee that their ſtrength is weakneſs; they will know that they will not be able to grapple with ſuch torments, and that they can do nothing in ſuch a conflict.

When they ſhall have come to the edge of the pit, and of the burning lake, and ſhall look into the furnace, then they will cry out with exclamations like theſe: O! what ſhall I do? how ſhall I bear the torments of this fire? how can I endure them? Who can endure? where is the man ſo ſtout-hearted, where is the giant of ſuch ſtrength and ſuch courage,

courage, that he can bear this? O! what ſhall I do? Muſt I be caſt in thither? I cannot bear it; I can never endure it. O that I could return to my firſt nothing! How can I endure it one moment? how much leſs can I endure it for ever and ever? And muſt I bear it for ever? what! for ever and ever, without any end, and never find any refuge, never be ſuffered to return to my firſt nothing, and be no nearer to the end of theſe ſufferings after millions of ages? O what diſmal contentions and ſhrieks, and ſhaking of loins, and gnaſhing of teeth, will there be then! No wonder that fearfulneſs will then ſurpriſe the wicked.——I come now,

IV. To ſhow, why it will be eſpecially thus with the ſinners in Zion, or ſinners that dwell among God's viſible people, who ſit under the preaching of the goſpel, and have the offers of a Saviour, and yet accept not of him, but remain in an unconverted ſtate.

There will hereafter be a very great difference between them and other ſinners; a great difference between the moſt pointed hypocrite of them all, and the drunkards, the adulterers, the Sodomites, the thieves, and murderers among the Heathen, who ſin againſt only the light of nature. The fearfulneſs which will ſurpriſe them, although it will be very dreadful, yet will be in no meaſure ſo amazing and horrible, as that which will ſeize the ſinners in Zion. That fierceneſs and wrath of Almighty God, which they will ſuffer, will be mild and moderate in compariſon with that which the ſinners in Zion will ſuffer.

The wrath of God is in his word manifeſted againſt the wicked Heathens; but it is ten times as much manifeſted againſt thoſe ſinners who make the profeſſion and enjoy the privileges of the people of God; and yet remain enemies to God. Both the Old Teſtament and the New are full of terrible denunciations againſt ſuch. Read the books of Moſes, and read the prophets, and you will find them full of dreadful threatenings againſt ſuch. Read over the hiſtory of Chriſt's life, and the ſpeeches which he made when upon earth; there you will ſee what woes and curſes he frequently denounced againſt ſuch. How often did he ſay, that it ſhould be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgement, than for the cities in which moſt of his mighty works were done! Read over the hiſtory of the Acts of the Apoſtles, and their epiſtles; there you will find the ſame. It is the ſinners in Zion, or

hypocrites,

hypocrites, that are always in ſcripture ſpoken of as the people of God's wrath: Iſa. x. 6. "I will ſend him againſt "an hypocritical nation, againſt the people of my wrath "will I give him a charge, to take the ſpoil."

Now, the reaſons of this are chiefly theſe:

1. That they ſin againſt ſo much greater light. This is often ſpoken of in ſcripture, as an aggravation to the ſin and wickedneſs of ſinners in Zion. He that knows not his Lord's will, and doeth it not, is declared not to be worthy of ſo many ſtripes, as he who, being informed of his Lord's will, is in like manner diſobedient. If men be blind, they have comparatively no ſin; but when they ſee, when they have light to know their duty, and to know their obligation, then their ſin is great, John ix. 41. When the light that is in a man is darkneſs, how great is that darkneſs! and when men live in wickedneſs, in the midſt of great light, that light is like to be the blackneſs of darkneſs indeed.

2. That they ſin againſt ſuch profeſſions and vows. The Heathens never pretended to be the worſhippers of the true God. They never pretended to be Chriſt's diſciples; they never came under any covenant-obligations to be ſuch. But this is not the caſe with ſinners in Zion. Now, God highly reſents falſehood and treachery. Judas, who betrayed Chriſt with a kiſs, was a greater ſinner, and much more the object of God's wrath, than Pilate, who condemned him to be crucified, and was his murderer.

3. That they ſin againſt ſo much greater mercy. They have the infinite mercy of God, in giving his own Son, often ſet before them: they have the dying love of Chriſt repreſented to them: they have this mercy, this glorious Saviour, his blood and righteouſneſs, often offered to them: they have a bleſſed opportunity to obtain ſalvation for their ſouls; a great price is put into their hands to this end: they have that precious treaſure, the holy ſcriptures, and enjoy Sabbaths, and ſacraments, and the various means of grace: But all theſe means and advantages, theſe opportunities, offers, mercies, and invitations, they abuſe, neglect, deſpiſe, and reject.

But there is no wrath like that which ariſes from mercy abuſed and rejected. When mercy is in this way turned into wrath, this is the fierceſt wrath; in compariſon with this, other wrath is cool.

Sinners in Zion, beſide their fall by the firſt Adam, have a fall alſo by the ſecond: he is a ſtone of ſtumbling and a rock

rock of offence, at which they ſtumble and fall; and there is no fall like this; the fall by the firſt Adam is light in compariſon with it.

On theſe accounts, whenever we ſee the day of judgement, as every one of us ſhall ſee it, we ſhall eaſily diſtinguiſh between the ſinners in Zion and other ſinners, by their ſhriller cries, their louder, more bitter, and dolorous ſhrieks, the greater amazement of their countenances, and the more diſmal ſhaking of their limbs, and contortions of their bodies.

I ſhall conclude with an earneſt EXHORTATION to ſinners in Zion, now to fly from the devouring fire and everlaſting burnings.

You ſinners who are here preſent, you are the very perſons ſpoken of in the text; you are the ſinners in Zion. How many of theſe people of God's wrath are there ſitting here and there in the ſeats of this houſe at this time? You have often been exhorted to fly from the wrath to come. This devouring fire, theſe everlaſting burnings, of which we have been ſpeaking, are the wrath to come. You hear to-day of this fire, of theſe burnings, and of that fearfulneſs which will ſeize and ſurpriſe ſinners in Zion hereafter; and O what reaſon have you of thankfulneſs that you only hear of them, that you do not as yet feel them, and that they have not already taken hold of you! They are, as it were, following you, and coming nearer and nearer every day. Thoſe fierce flames are, as it were, already kindled in the wrath of God; yea, the fierceneſs and wrath of Almighty God burn againſt you; it is ready for you: that pit is prepared for you, with fire and much wood, and the wrath of the Lord, as a ſtream of brimſtone, doth kindle it.

Lot was with great urgency haſtened out of Sodom, and commanded to make haſte, and fly for his life, and eſcape to the mountains, leſt he ſhould be conſumed in thoſe flames which burned up Sodom and Gomorrah. But that burning was a mere ſpark to that devouring fire, and thoſe everlaſting burnings, of which you are in danger. Therefore improve the preſent opportunity.

Now, God is pleaſed again to pour out his ſpirit upon us; and he is doing great things among us. God is indeed come again, the ſame great God who ſo wonderfully appeared among us ſome years ago, and who hath ſince, for our ſins, departed from us, left us ſo long in ſo dull and

dead a ſtate, and hath let ſinners alone in their ſins; ſo that there have been ſcarcely any ſigns to be ſeen of any ſuch work as converſion: that ſame God is now come again; he is really come in like manner, and begins, as he did before, glorioufly to manifeſt his mighty power, and the riches of his grace. He brings ſinners out of darkneſs into marvellous light. He reſcues poor captive ſouls out of the hands of Satan; he ſaves perſons from the devouring fire; he plucks one and another as brands out of the burnings; he opens the priſon-doors, and knocks off their chains, and brings out poor priſoners; he is now working ſalvation among us from this very deſtruction of which you have now heard.

Now, now, then, is the time, now is the bleſſed opportunity to eſcape thoſe everlaſting burnings. Now God hath again ſet open the ſame fountain among us, and gives one more happy opportunity for ſouls to eſcape. Now he hath ſet open a wide door, and he ſtands in the door-way, calling and begging with a loud voice to the ſinners of Zion: Come, ſaith he to me, come, fly from the wrath to come; here is a refuge for you; fly hither for refuge; lay hold on the hope ſet before you.

A little while ago, it was uncertain whether we ſhould ever ſee ſuch an opportunity again. If it had always continued as it hath been for five or ſix years paſt, almoſt all of you would ſurely have gone to hell; in a little time fearfulneſs would have ſurpriſed you, and you would have been caſt into that devouring fire, and thoſe everlaſting burnings. But in infinite mercy God gives another opportunity; and bleſſed are your eyes, that they ſee it, if you did but know your own opportunity.

You have had your life ſpared through theſe ſix years paſt, to this very time, to another outpouring of the Spirit. What would you have done, if you had died before it came? How doleful would your caſe have been! But you have reaſon to bleſs God that it was not ſo, and that you are yet alive, and now again ſee a bleſſed day of grace. And will you not improve it! Have you not ſo much love to your poor ſouls, as to improve ſuch an opportunity as this?

Some, there is reaſon to think, have lately fled for refuge to Chriſt; and will you be willing to ſtay behind ſtill, poor miſerable captives, condemned to ſuffer for ever in the lake of fire? Hereafter you will ſee thoſe of your neighbours and acquaintance, who are converted, mounting up as with wings,

wings, with ſongs of joy, to meet their Lord; and if you remain unconverted, you at the ſame time will be ſurpriſed with fear, and horror will take hold of you, becauſe of the devouring fire, and the everlaſting burnings.

It is an awful thing to think of, that there are now ſome perſons in this very congregation, here and there, in one ſeat and another, who will be the ſubjects of that very miſery of which we have now heard, although it be ſo dreadful, although it be ſo intolerable, and although it be eternal! There are probably ſome now hearing this ſermon, whom the reſt of the congregation will, at the day of judgement, ſee among the devils, at the left hand of the Judge. They will ſee their frighted ghaſtly countenances; they will ſee them wring their hands, and gnaſh their teeth, ſhrieking and crying out.

Now we know not their names, we know not what ſeats they ſit in, nor where to look for them, nor whom to pitch upon. But God knoweth their names, and now ſeeth and knoweth what they think, and how much they regard the warnings which are given them this day. We have not the leaſt reaſon to ſuppoſe any other than that ſome of you will hereafter ſee others entering into glory with Chriſt, and ſaints, and angels, while you, with dreadful horror, ſhall ſee the fire begin to kindle about you. It may be, that the perſons are now bleſſing themſelves in their own hearts, and each one ſaying with himſelf, Well, I do not intend it ſhall be I. Every one here hopes to go to heaven; none would by any means miſs of it. If any thought they ſhould miſs of it, they would be greatly amazed. But all will not go thither; it will undoubtedly be the portion of ſome to toſs and tumble for ever among the fiery billows of God's wrath.

It is not to be ſuppoſed, but that there are ſome here who will not be in earneſt; let them have ever ſo good an opportunity to obtain heaven, they will not thoroughly improve it. Tell them of hell as often as you will, and ſet it out in as lively colours as you will, they will be ſlack and ſlothful; and they will never be likely to obtain heaven, while they are ſleeping, and dreaming, and intending, and hoping. The wrath of God, which purſues them, will take them by the heels; hell, that follows after, will overtake them; fearfulneſs will ſurpriſe them, and a tempeſt will ſteal them away.

Nor is it to be ſuppoſed, that all who are now ſeeking will hold out; ſome will backſlide; they will be unſteady.

If now they ſeem to be pretty much engaged, it will not hold. Times will probably alter by and by, and they having not obtained grace, there will be many temptations to backſliding, with which they will comply. The hearts of men are very unſteady; they are not to be truſted. Men are very ſhort winded; they cannot tell how to have patience to wait upon God; they are ſoon diſcouraged. Some that are now under convictions may loſe them. Perhaps they will not leave off ſeeking ſalvation at once; but they will come to it by degrees. After a while, they will begin to hearken to excuſes, not to be quite ſo conſtant in duty; they will begin to think that they need not be quite ſo ſtrict; they will ſay to themſelves, they ſee no hurt in ſuch and ſuch things; they ſee not but they may practiſe them without any, or to be ſure, any great guilt. Thus giving way to temptations, and hearkening to excuſes, they will by degrees loſe their convictions, and become ſecure in ſin.

There were ſome who were guilty of backſliding, the laſt time of the revival of religion among us. While the talk upon religious ſubjects was generally kept alive, they continued to ſeek; but when this began to abate, and they ſaw others leſs zealous than they had been, and eſpecially when they ſaw ſome miſcarriages of profeſſors, they began to grow more careleſs, to ſeek leſs earneſtly, and to plead theſe things as an excuſe. And they are left behind ſtill; they are to this day in a miſerable condemned ſtate, in danger of the devouring fire, and of everlaſting burnings; in twice ſo dangerous a ſtate as they were in before they were awakened; and God only knows what will become of them. And as it was then, ſo we dread it will be now.

Some who are now here preſent in a natural condition, are doubtleſs near death; they have not long to live in the world; and if they ſeek in a dull way, or if, after they have ſought for a while, they are guilty of backſliding, death will come upon them long enough before there will come ſuch another opportunity. When they leave off ſeeking, it will not be without a deſign of ſeeking again ſome time or other; but death will be too quick for them. It is not the manner of death to wait upon men, while they take time to indulge their ſloth, and gratify their luſts. When his appointed time comes, he will do his work. Will you put off in hopes of ſeeing another ſuch time ſeven years hence? Alas! how many of thoſe who are now in a natural condition may be in hell before another ſeven years ſhall have elapſed!

Therefore now let every one look to himſelf. It is for your

your own ſouls ſalvation. If you be fooliſh, and will not hearken to counſel, will not improve the opportunity when it is given you, and will not enter into ſuch an open door, you alone muſt bear it. If you ſhall miſs this opportunity, and quench your convictions now, and there ſhall come another time of the outpouring of the Spirit, you will be far leſs likely to have any profit by it; as we ſee now God chiefly moves on the hearts of thoſe who are very young, who are brought forward upon the ſtage of action ſince the laſt outpouring of the Spirit, who were not then come to years of ſo much underſtanding, and conſequently not ſo much in the way of the influences of the Spirit. As to thoſe who were grown up, and had convictions then, and quenched them, the moſt of theſe are abundantly more hardened, and ſeem to be more paſſed over. So it will probably be with you hereafter, if you miſs this opportunity, and quench the convictions of the Spirit which you have now.

As to you who had awakenings the laſt time of the outpouring of the Spirit, and have quenched them, and remain to this day in a natural condition, let me call upon you alſo, now that God is giving you one more ſuch opportunity. If paſſing in impenitence through one ſuch opportunity hath ſo hardened you, and hath been ſuch a great diſadvantage to you, how ſad will your caſe be, if you ſhall now miſs another! Will you not now thoroughly awake out of ſleep, beſtir yourſelves for your ſalvation, and reſolve now to begin again, and never leave off more? Many fled for refuge from the devouring fire before, and you were left behind. Others have fled for refuge now, and ſtill you are left behind; and will you always remain behind? Conſider, can you dwell with devouring fire? can you dwell with everlaſting burnings? Shall children, babes and ſucklings, go into the kingdom of God before you.

How will you hereafter bear to ſee them coming and ſitting down with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, when yourſelves are thruſt out, and are ſurpriſed with fearfulneſs at the ſight of that devouring fire, and thoſe everlaſting burnings, into which you are about to be caſt? Take heed leſt a like threatening be fulfilled upon you with that which we have in Numb. xiv. 22. 23. "Be-
"cauſe all thoſe men which have ſeen my glory, and my
"miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderneſs,
"and have tempted me now theſe ten times, and have not
"hearkened to my voice; ſurely they ſhall not ſee the land
"which

" which I ſware unto their fathers; neither ſhall any of
" them that provoked me ſee it." Together with verſ. 31.
" But your little ones, which ye ſaid ſhould be a prey, them
" will I bring in, and they ſhall know the land which ye
" have deſpiled."

SER.

SERMON XXI.*

When the Wicked ſhall have filled up the Meaſure of their Sin, Wrath will come upon them to the uttermoſt.

1 THESS. ii. 16.

To fill up their ſins alway; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermoſt.

IN verſ. 14. the apoſtle commends the Chriſtian Theſſalonians, that they became the followers of the churches of God in Judea, both in faith and in ſufferings; in faith, in that they received the word of God, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God; in ſufferings, in that they had ſuffered like things of their own countrymen, as *they* had of the Jews. Upon which the apoſtle ſets forth the perſecuting, cruel, and perverſe wickedneſs of that people, "who both killed the Lord Jeſus and their own pro-"phets," ſays he, "and have perſecuted us; and they pleaſe "not God, and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to "ſpeak to the Gentiles, that they might be ſaved." Then come in the words of the text: "To fill up their ſins al-"way; for the wrath is come upon them to the utter-"moſt."

In theſe words we may obſerve two things:

1. To what effect was the heinouſneſs and obſtinacy of the wickedneſs of the Jews, viz. *to fill up their ſins.* God hath ſet bounds to every man's wickedneſs; he hath limited, in his eternal decree, the degree of the wickedneſs of every reprobate, to which his puniſhment is to be proportioned. God ſuffers men to live, and to go on in ſin, till they have filled up their meaſure, and then cuts them off.

* Dated May 1735.

To

To this effect was the wickedneſs and obſtinacy of the Jews: they were exceedingly wicked, and thereby filled up the meaſure of their ſins a great pace. And the reaſon why they were permitted to be ſo obſtinate under the preaching and miracles of Chriſt, and of the apoſtles, and under all the means that were uſed with them, was, that they might fill up the meaſure of their ſins. This is agreeable to what Chriſt ſaid, Matth. xxiii. 31. 32. "Wherefore ye be wit-"neſſes unto yourſelves, that ye are the children of them "which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the meaſure "of your fathers."

2. The puniſhment of their wickedneſs: "The wrath is "come upon them to the uttermoſt." There is a connection between the uttermoſt meaſure of men's ſin, and the uttermoſt meaſure of puniſhment. When they have filled up the meaſure of their ſin, then is filled up the meaſure of God's wrath. There are three things denoted in this laſt expreſſion, "The wrath is come upon them to the utter-"moſt."

(1.) The degree of their puniſhment, which is the *uttermoſt* degree. This may reſpect both a national and perſonal puniſhment. If we take it as a national puniſhment, in this ſenſe, a little after the time when this epiſtle was written, wrath came upon the nation of the Jews to the uttermoſt, in their terrible deſtruction by the Romans; when, as Chriſt ſaid, "was great tribulation, ſuch as never was ſince the "beginning of the world to that time," Matth. xxiv. 21. That nation had before ſuffered many of the fruits of divine wrath for their ſins; but this was beyond all, this was their higheſt degree of puniſhment as a nation. If we take it as a perſonal puniſhment, then it reſpects their puniſhment in hell. God often puniſhes men very dreadfully in this world; but in hell wrath comes on them to the uttermoſt.

(2.) By this expreſſion is denoted the *certainty* of this puniſhment. For though the puniſhment was then future, yet it is ſpoken of as preſent: "The wrath *is* come upon "them to the uttermoſt." It was as certain as if it already was. God, who knows all things, and has certainly decreed what ſhall come to paſs, ſpeaks of things that are not as though they were; for things preſent and things future are equally certain with him.

(3.) It denotes the *near approach* of it. *The wrath* is *come*; i. e. it is juſt at hand; it is at the door; as it proved with reſpect to that nation: their terrible deſtruction by

by the Romans was ſoon after the Apoſtle wrote this epiſtle.

Doctrine. When thoſe that continue in ſin ſhall have filled up the meaſure of their ſin, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermoſt.

I. Prop. There is a certain meaſure that God hath ſet to the ſin of every wicked man. God ſays concerning the ſin of man, as he ſays to the raging waves of the ſea, Hitherto ſhalt thou come, and no further. The meaſure of ſome is much greater than of others. Some reprobates are to commit but a little ſin in compariſon with others, and ſo are to endure proportionably a ſmaller puniſhment. There are many who are deſigned to be veſſels of wrath; but ſome are to be ſmaller veſſels, and others greater veſſels; ſome will contain comparatively but little wrath, others a greater meaſure of it. Sometimes, when we ſee men go to dreadful lengths in ſin, and become very heinouſly wicked, we are ready to wonder that God lets them alone. God ſees them go on in ſuch audacious wickedneſs, and keeps ſilence, nor does any thing to interrupt them, but they go ſmoothly on, and meet with no hurt.

And ſometimes the reaſon why God lets them alone is, becauſe they have not filled up the meaſure of their ſins. When they live in dreadful wickedneſs, they are but filling up the meaſure which God hath limited for them. This is ſometimes the reaſon why God ſuffers very wicked men to live ſo long; it is becauſe their iniquity is not full: Gen. xv. 16. "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." For this reaſon alſo God ſometimes ſuffers them to live in proſperity. Their proſperity is a ſnare to them, and an occaſion of their ſinning a great deal more. Wherefore God ſuffers them to have ſuch a ſnare, becauſe he intends to ſuffer them to fill up a larger meaſure. So, for this cauſe, he ſometimes ſuffers them to live under great light, and great means and advantages, at the ſame time to neglect and miſimprove all, becauſe he hath determined to ſuffer them to fill up a larger meaſure. Every one ſhall live till he hath filled up his meaſure. No accident, no ſickneſs, nothing that befals him, ſhall be the means of his death, till he ſhall have filled up the meaſure of his ſin.

II. Prop. While men continue in ſin, they are filling the meaſure ſet them. This is the work in which they ſpend

their whole lives: they are all the while filling up their meaſure. This is the work which they begin in their childhood; and if they live to grow old in ſin, they ſtill go on with this work. It is the work with which every day is filled up. They may alter their buſineſs in other reſpects; they may ſometimes be about one thing, and ſometimes about another; ſometimes they may be at work, ſometimes talking, ſometimes eating, ſometimes reading, ſometimes praying, ſometimes hearing; but they never change from this work of filling up the meaſure of their ſins. Whatever they put their hands to, they are ſtill employed in this work. When they are at work in the field, they are filling up the meaſure of their ſins; when they are ſitting ſtill in their houſes, they are filling up the meaſure of their ſins; when they are eating and drinking, they are filling up the meaſure of their ſins; when they pray in their families and cloſets, they are filling up the meaſure of their ſins; and if they neglect prayer, they fill up the meaſure of their ſins. This is the firſt thing that they ſet themſelves about when they awake in the morning, and the laſt thing that they do at night. They are all the while treaſuring up wrath againſt the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgement of God.

It is a groſs miſtake of ſome natural men, who think that when they read and pray they do not add to their ſins; but, on the contrary, think they diminiſh their guilt by theſe exerciſes. They think, that inſtead of adding to their ſins, they do ſomething to ſatisfy for their paſt ſins; that they then make ſome compenſation for their foregoing wickedneſs; but inſtead of that they do but add to the meaſure by their beſt prayers, and by thoſe ſervices with which they themſelves are moſt pleaſed.

III. Prop. When once the meaſure of their ſins is filled up, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermoſt. God will then wait no longer upon them. Wicked men think that God is altogether ſuch an one as themſelves, becauſe, when they commit ſuch wickedneſs, he keeps ſilence. But when the meaſure of their ſins ſhall be full, God will keep ſilence no longer: "Becauſe judgement againſt an "evil work is not executed ſpeedily, therefore the heart "of the children of men is fully ſet in them to do evil." But when once they ſhall have filled up the meaſure of their ſins, judgement will be executed; God will not bear with them any longer. Now is the day of grace, and the day of patience,

patience, which they ſpend in filling up their ſins; but when their ſins ſhall be full, then will come the day of wrath, the day of the fierce anger of God.

God often executes his wrath on ungodly men, in a leſs degree, in this world. He ſometimes brings afflictions and judgements upon them, and that in wrath. Sometimes he expreſſes his wrath in very ſore judgements; ſometimes he appears in a terrible manner, in what he brings on wicked men in this world. Sometimes he expreſſes his wrath towards wicked men in this world, not only outwardly, but alſo in the inward expreſſions of it on their conſciences. Some, before they died, have had the wrath of God inflicted on their ſouls in degrees that have been intolerable. But theſe things are only forerunners of their puniſhment, only ſlight foretaſtes of wrath. God never ſtirs up all his wrath againſt wicked men while in this world; but when once wicked men ſhall have filled up the meaſure of their ſins, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermoſt; and that in the following reſpects.

1. Wrath will come upon them without any reſtraint or moderation in the degree of it. Wrath is never executed in this manner before men have filled up the meaſure of their ſin. God doth always lay, as it were, a reſtraint upon himſelf; he doth not ſtir up his wrath; he ſtays his rough wind in the day of his eaſt wind; he lets not his arm light down on wicked men with its full weight. When God ſmites, he ſmites with caution, leſt he ſhould ſmite too hard. But when ſinners ſhall have filled up the meaſure of their ſins, there will be no ſuch caution; there will then be no reſtraint. His rough wind will not be ſtayed nor moderated. The wrath of God will be poured out like fire. God will come forth, not only in anger, but in the fierceneſs of his anger; he will execute wrath with power, ſo as to ſhow what his wrath is, and make his power known. There will be nothing to alleviate his wrath; his heavy wrath will lie on them, without any thing to lighten the burden, or to keep off, in any meaſure, the full weight of it from preſſing the ſoul.

God will execute wrath without pity. His eye will not ſpare, neither will he have any pity, nor in the leaſt regard the ſinner's cries and lamentations, however loud and bitter. Then ſhall wicked men know that God is the Lord; they ſhall know what it is to ſin againſt ſo great a God. Then they ſhall know how great that majeſty is which they have deſpiſed, and how dreadful that threatened wrath is

which they have ſo little regarded. Then ſhall come on wicked men that puniſhment which they deſerve. God ſometimes expreſſes his wrath towards the ungodly very terribly, while they are in this world; but he never, in this world, puniſhes them as they deſerve. However, in the future world, God will exact of them the uttermoſt farthing. Their iniquities are marked before God; they are all written in his book; and in the future world God will reckon with them, and they muſt pay all the debt. Their ſins are laid up in ſtore with God; they are ſealed up among his treaſures; and them he will recompenſe, even recompenſe into their boſoms.

The conſummate degree of the puniſhment of wicked men will not be executed upon them till the day of judgement; but they are ſealed over to this conſummate puniſhment immediately after death; they are caſt into hell, and there bound in chains of darkneſs to the judgement of the great day; and they know that the higheſt degree of puniſhment is coming upon them. When once ſinners ſhall have filled up the meaſure of their ſins, wrath will be executed without any mixture; all mercy, all enjoyments will be taken away. God ſometimes expreſſes his wrath in this world; but in this world there are good things and evil things mixed together; but in the future there will be only evil things.

2. Wrath will then be executed without any merciful circumſtances. The judgements which God executes on ungodly men in this world, are attended with many merciful circumſtances. There is much patience and long-ſuffering, together with judgement; judgements are joined with continuance of opportunity to ſeek mercy. But in hell there will be no more exerciſes of divine patience. The judgements which God exerciſes on ungodly men in this world are warnings to them to avoid greater puniſhments; but the wrath which will come upon them, when they ſhall have filled up the meaſure of their ſin, will not be of the nature of warnings.

Indeed they will be effectually awakened, and made thoroughly ſenſible, by what they ſhall ſuffer; yet their being awakened and made ſenſible will do them no good. Many a wicked man hath ſuffered very awful things from God in this world; and it hath been a means of his ſaving good; but that wrath which ſinners ſhall ſuffer after death will be no way for their good. God will have no merciful deſign in

in it; neither will it be poſſible that they ſhould get any good by that or by any thing elſe.

3. Wrath will be ſo executed, as to perfect the work to which wrath tends, viz. utterly to undo the ſubject of it. Wrath is often ſo executed in this world, as greatly to diſtreſs perſons, and bring them into exceeding calamity; yet not ſo as to complete the ruin of thoſe who ſuffer it; but in another world, it will be ſo executed, as to finiſh their deſtruction, and render them utterly and perfectly undone: it will take away all comfort, all hope, and all ſupport.

God will execute his wrath, ſo as to have no regard at all to the welfare of the ſinner. The ſoul will be, as it were, utterly cruſhed; the wrath will be wholly intolerable. The ſoul muſt ſink, and will ſink, will utterly ſink, and will have no more ſtrength to keep itſelf from ſinking than a worm would have to keep itſelf from being cruſhed under the weight of a mountain. The wrath will be ſo great, and ſo mighty and powerful, as wholly to aboliſh all manner of welfare: Matth. xxi. 44. "But on whomſoever it ſhall fall, "it will grind him to powder."

4. When perſons ſhall have filled up the meaſure of their ſin, that wrath will come upon them which is eternal. Tho' men may ſuffer very terrible and awful judgements in this world, yet thoſe judgements may have an end. They may be long continued, yet they commonly admit of relief. Temporal diſtreſſes and ſorrows have intermiſſions and reſpite, and commonly by degrees abate and wear off; but the wrath that ſhall be executed, when the meaſure of ſin ſhall have been filled up, will have no end. Thus it will be to the uttermoſt as to its duration; it will be of ſo long continuance, that it will be impoſſible it ſhould be longer: The duration will be ſo great, that it will be impoſſible that it ſhould be added to. Nothing can be longer than eternity.

5. When perſons ſhall have filled up the meaſure of their ſin, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermoſt of what is threatened. Sin is an infinite evil; and the puniſhment which God hath threatened againſt it is very dreadful. The threatenings of God againſt the workers of iniquity are very awful; but theſe threatenings are never fully accompliſhed in this world. However dreadful things ſome men may ſuffer in this world, yet God never fully executes his threatenings for ſo much as one ſin, till they have filled up the whole meaſure of their ſins.

The threatenings of the law are never anſwered by any thing

thing that any man ſuffers here. The moſt awful judgement in this life doth not anſwer God's threatenings, either in degree, or in circumſtances, or in duration. If the greateſt ſufferings that ever are endured in this life ſhould be eternal, it would not anſwer the threatening. Indeed temporal judgements do belong to the threatenings of the law; but the threatenings of the law are not anſwered by them; they are but foretaſtes of the puniſhment: "The wages of "ſin is death." No expreſſions of wrath that are ſuffered before men have filled up the meaſure of their ſin, are the full wages of ſin. God doth not till then pay men their due. But then God will reckon with men, and will recompenſe into their boſoms the full ſum which he hath aſſigned them in the covenant that he hath made with them.

APPLICATION.

The uſe I would make of this doctrine is, of warning to natural men, to reſt no longer in ſin, and to make haſte to flee from it. The things which have been ſaid, under this doctrine, may well be awakening, awful conſiderations to you. It is awful to conſider whoſe wrath it is that abides upon you, and what wrath you are in danger of. It is impoſſible to expreſs the miſery of a natural condition. To be in a natural condition, is like being in Sodom, with a dreadful ſtorm of fire and brimſtone hanging over it, juſt ready to break forth, and to be poured down upon it. The clouds of divine vengeance are full, and juſt ready to burſt. Here let thoſe who yet continue in ſin in this town conſider particularly,

1. Under what great means and advantages you continue in ſin. God is now favouring us with very great and extraordinary means and advantages, in that we have not only the word and ordinances amongſt us, but in that there are ſuch extraordinary tokens of the preſence of God among us, as his Spirit is ſo remarkably poured out, and multitudes of all ages, and all ſorts, are converted and brought home to Chriſt. There are mighty works of God done among us; God appears among us in the moſt extraordinary manner, perhaps, that ever he did in New England. The children of Iſrael ſaw many mighty works of God, when he brought them out of Egypt; but we here at this day ſee works of God more mighty, and of a more glorious nature.

We who live under ſuch light have all, one day or other, had

had loud calls; but now above all. Now is a day of ſalvation. The fountain hath been ſet open among us in an extraordinary manner, and hath ſtood open for a conſiderable time: Yet you continue in ſin, and all the calls that you have hitherto had have not brought you in, to be waſhed in it. What extraordinary advantages have you lately enjoyed! what means have you had of late, to ſtir you up! How hath every thing in the town, of late, been of that tendency! Thoſe things which uſed to be the greateſt hindrances have been removed. You have not the ill examples of immoral perſons to be a temptation to you. There is not now that vain worldly talk, and ill company, to divert you, and be an hindrance to you, which there uſed to be. Now you have multitudes of good examples ſet before you; there are many now all around you, who, inſtead of diverting and hindering you, are earneſtly deſirous of your ſalvation, and willing to do all that they can to move you to flee to Chriſt: they have a thirſting deſire for it. The chief talk in the town has of late been about the things of religion, and has been ſuch as hath tended to promote, and not to hinder, your ſouls good. Every thing all around you hath tended to ſtir you up; and will you yet continue in ſin?

Some of you have continued in ſin till you are far advanced in the time of life. You were warned when you were children; and ſome of you had awakenings then, and intended to be converted then; yet you continued in ſin. However, the time went away, and you became men and women; and then ſome of you were ſtirred up again, you had the ſtrivings of God's Spirit again, and then you intended to be converted; yet you continued in ſin. Some of you have fixed the times when you would make thorough work of ſeeking ſalvation. Some of you perhaps determined to do it when you ſhould be married and ſettled in the world; others when you ſhould have finiſhed ſuch a buſineſs, and when your circumſtances ſhould be ſo and ſo altered. Now theſe times which you ſet have come, and are paſt; yet you continue in ſin.

Many of you have had remarkable warnings of Providence. Some of you have been warned by the deaths of near relations; you have ſtood by, and ſeen others die and go into eternity; yet this hath not been effectual. Some of you have been near death yourſelves, have been brought nigh the grave in ſore ſickneſs, and were full of your promiſes how you would behave yourſelves, if it ſhould pleaſe God

God to ſpare your lives. Some of you have very narrowly eſcaped death by dangerous accidents; but God was pleaſed to ſpare you, to give you a further ſpace to repent; yet you continue in ſin.

Some of you have ſeen times of remarkable outpourings of the Spirit of God, in this town, in times paſt; but it had no good effect on you. *You* had the ſtrivings of the Spirit of God too, as well as others. God did not paſs by your door, but came and knocked; yet you ſtood it out. Now God hath come again in a more remarkable manner than ever before, and hath been pouring out his Spirit for ſome months, in the moſt gracious influences of it; yet you remain in ſin until now. In the beginning of this awakening, you were warned to flee from wrath, and to forſake your ſins. You were told what a wide door there was open, what an accepted time it was, and were urged to preſs into the kingdom of God. And many did preſs in; they forſook their ſins, and believed in Chriſt: *but you, when you had ſeen it, repented not, that you might believe him.*

Then you were warned again, and ſtill others have been preſſing and thronging into the kingdom of God. Many men have fled for refuge, and have laid hold on Chriſt; yet you continue in ſin and unbelief. You have ſeen multitudes of all ſorts, of all ages, young and old, flocking to Chriſt, and many of about your age and your circumſtances; but you ſtill are in the ſame miſerable condition in which you uſed to be. You have ſeen perſons daily flocking to Chriſt, as doves to their windows; yet the Lord hath not given you eyes to ſee, nor ears to hear, nor hearts to underſtand, to this day. God hath not only poured out his Spirit on this town, but alſo on other towns around us, and they are flocking in there, as well as people here. This bleſſing ſpreads further and further; many, far and near, ſeem to be ſetting their faces Zion-ward; yet you who live here, where this work firſt began, continue behind ſtill; you have no lot nor portion in this matter.

2. How dreadful the wrath of God is, when it is executed to the uttermoſt. To make you in ſome meaſure ſenſible of that, I deſire you to conſider two things.

(1.) Whoſe wrath it is. The wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion; but this wrath is not the wrath of a king, but it is the wrath of Jehovah, the Lord God Omnipotent. Let us conſider, what can we rationally think of it? How dreadful muſt be the wrath of ſuch a Being, when it comes upon a perſon to the uttermoſt, without any

pity,

pity, or moderation, or merciful circumſtances! What muſt be the uttermoſt of his wrath, who made heaven and earth by the word of his power; who ſpake, and it was done, who commanded, and it ſtood faſt! What muſt his wrath be, who manages the ſun, moon, and ſtars, and keeps them in their courſes from age to age, and faints not, neither is weary! What muſt his wrath be, who commandeth the ſun, and it riſes not, and ſealeth up the ſtars! What muſt his wrath be, who ſhaketh the earth out of his place, and cauſeth the pillars of heaven to tremble! What muſt his wrath be, who rebuketh the ſea, and maketh it dry, who removeth the mountains out of their places, and overturneth them in his anger! What muſt his wrath be, whoſe majeſty is ſo awful, that no man, no not the greateſt prince, could live in the ſight of it! What muſt the wrath of ſuch a Being be, when it comes to the uttermoſt, when this Being makes his majeſty appear and ſhine bright in the miſery of wicked men! And what is a worm of the duſt before the fury and under the weight of this wrath, which the ſtouteſt devils cannot bear, but utterly ſink, and are cruſhed under it.

(2.) Conſider how dreadful the wrath of God is ſometimes in this world, only in a little taſte or view of it. Sometimes, when God only enlightens conſcience, to have ſomething of a ſenſe of the wrath of God, it cauſes the ſtout-hearted to cry out. It is ſometimes quite overbearing, nature is ready to ſink under it, when indeed it is but a little glimpſe of divine wrath that is ſeen. This hath been obſerved in many caſes. But if a ſlight taſte and apprehenſion of wrath be ſo dreadful and intolerable, what muſt the wrath of God be, when it comes upon perſons to the uttermoſt! When a few drops or little ſprinkling of wrath is ſo diſtreſſing and overbearing to the ſoul, how muſt it be when God opens the flood-gates, and lets the mighty deluge of his wrath come pouring down upon men's guilty heads, and brings in all his waves and billows upon their ſouls! How little can men bear! how little of God's wrath will ſink them! Pſal. ii. 12. "When his wrath is kindled but a little, "bleſſed are all they that put their truſt in him."

3. Conſider, you know not what wrath God may be about to execute upon wicked men in this world. Wrath may in ſome ſenſe be coming upon them in this world to the uttermoſt, for ought we know. When it is ſaid in the text, of the Jews, "The wrath is come upon them to the ut-"termoſt," reſpect is had, not only to the execution of

God's wrath on that people in hell, but without doubt to that terrible deſtruction of Judea and Jeruſalem, which was then near approaching, by the Romans. We know not but that wrath is now coming, in ſome peculiarly awful manner, on the wicked world. God ſeems, by the things which he is doing among us, to be coming forth for ſome great thing. The work which hath been lately wrought among us is no ordinary thing. He doth not work in his uſual way, but in a way very extraordinary; and it is probable, that it is a fore-runner of ſome very great revolution. We muſt not pretend to ſay what is in the womb of providence, or what is in the book of God's ſecret decrees; yet we may and ought to diſcern the ſigns of theſe times.

If God be now about to do glorious things for his church and people, yet it is probable that they will be accompanied with dreadful things to his enemies. It is the manner of God, when he brings about any glorious revolution for his people, at the ſame time to execute very awful judgements on his enemies: Deut. xxxii. 43. "Rejoice, O ye na-" tions, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of " his ſervants, and will render vengeance to his adverſa-" ries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people." Iſa. iii. 10. 11. "Say ye to the righteous, It ſhall be well " with him: for they ſhall eat the fruit of their doings. " Wo unto the wicked, it ſhall be ill with him: for the re-" ward of his hands ſhall be given him." Iſa. lxv. 13. 14. " Therefore thus ſaith the Lord God, Behold, my ſervants " ſhall eat, but ye ſhall be hungry: behold, my ſervants " ſhall drink, but ye ſhall be thirſty: behold, my ſervants " ſhall rejoice, but ye ſhall be aſhamed: behold, my ſer-" vants ſhall ſing for joy of heart, but ye ſhall cry for ſor-" row of heart, and ſhall howl for vexation of ſpirit." We find in ſcripture, that where glorious times are propheſied to God's people, there are at the ſame time awful judgements foretold to his enemies. What God is now about to do, we know not; but this we may know, that there will be no ſafety to any but thoſe who are in the ark.

Therefore it behoves all to haſte and flee for their lives, to get into a ſafe condition, to get into Chriſt; then they need not fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains carried into the midſt of the ſea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains ſhake with the ſwelling thereof: For God will be their refuge and ſtrength; they need not be afraid of evil tidings; their hearts may be fixed, truſting in God. There is a river

which

which will make glad the city of God at all times; let what times ſoever come, that river will not dry up. They that truſt in the Lord ſhall be as the tree planted by the waters, that ſpreadeth forth her roots by the river, and ſhall not ſee when heat cometh; but her leaf ſhall be green, and ſhall not be careful in the year of drought, nor ceaſe from yielding her fruit. Let what will come to paſs, they need not fear; for they have the eternal God for their refuge, and underneath are the everlaſting arms. They would be ſafe, though the heavens ſhould paſs away with a great noiſe, and the elements ſhould melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and all the works that are therein, ſhould be burnt up.

Let every one, therefore, now improve the time, to get into this place of ſafety, before the wrath of God overtakes him. Behold, now Chriſt hath ſet before you an open door; now is an accepted time, the time of God's gracious viſitation. Now is the time for you to beſtir yourſelves, as you would eſcape wrath, and would not have it come upon you to the uttermoſt. Now Chriſt is calling you; he ſends his miniſters to call you; he hath ſent me to call you. I now call you in his name. Come to him, flee to this refuge, that you may be ſafe. In him you ſhall be ſafe, and you ſhall be as welcome as any. Therefore make no objection from your unworthineſs, nor upon any other ground, but haſte and come away.

SERMON XXII.*

The Torments of the Wicked in Hell, no Occaſion of Grief to the Saints in Heaven.

REV. xviii. 20.

Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apoſtles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her.

IN this chapter we have a very particular account of the fall of Babylon, or the antichriſtian church, and of the vengeance of God executed upon her. Here it is proclaimed, that Babylon the Great is fallen, and become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul ſpirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird; that her ſins had reached unto heaven, and that God had remembered her iniquity; that God gave commandment to reward her, as ſhe had rewarded others, to double unto her double according to her works; in the which cup ſhe had filled, to fill to her double, and how much ſhe had glorified herſelf, and lived deliciouſly, ſo much torment and ſorrow to give her. And it is declared, that theſe plagues are come upon her in one day, death, mourning, and famine; and that ſhe ſhould be utterly burnt with fire; "becauſe ſtrong is the Lord who "judgeth her."

Theſe things have reſpect partly to the overthrow of the antichriſtian church in this world, and partly to the vengeance of God upon her in the world to come. There is no neceſſity that we ſhould ſuppoſe, that ſuch extreme torments as are here mentioned will ever be executed upon Papiſts, or upon thoſe that are of the antichriſtian church, in this world. There will indeed be a dreadful and viſible over-

* Dated March 1733.

throw

throw of that idolatrous church in this world. But we are not to underſtand theſe plagues here mentioned as excluſive of the vengeance which God will execute on the wicked upholders and promoters of antichriſtianiſm, and on the cruel antichriſtian perſecutors, in another world.

This is evident by verſ. 3. of the next chapter, where, with reference to the ſame deſtruction of antichriſt which is ſpoken of in this chapter, it is ſaid, "Her ſmoke roſe up "for ever and ever;" in which words the eternal puniſhment of antichriſt is evidently ſpoken of. Antichriſt is here repreſented as being caſt into hell, and there for ever remaining, i. e. for ever after, he hath no place any where elſe but in hell. This is evident by verſ. 20. of the next chapter, where, concerning the deſtruction of antichriſt it is ſaid, "And the beaſt was taken, and with him the falſe "prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which "he deceived them that received the mark of the beaſt, "and them that worſhipped his image. Theſe both were "caſt alive into a lake of fire burning with brim-"ſtone."

Not but that the wicked antichriſtians have in all ages gone to hell as they died, and are not merely caſt into hell at the time of the fall of antichriſt, but in the time of antichriſt's fall, that wrath of God againſt antichriſt, of which damnation is the fruit, will be made eminently viſible here on earth, by many remarkable tokens. Then antichriſt will be confined to hell, and will have no more place here on earth; much after the ſame manner as the devil is ſaid at the beginning of Chriſt's thouſand years reign on earth, to be caſt into the bottomleſs pit, as you may ſee in the beginning of the twentieth chapter. Not but that he had his place in the bottomleſs pit before; he was caſt down to hell when he fell at firſt: 2 Pet. ii. 4. "Caſt them down to hell, "and delivered them into chains of darkneſs." But now, when he ſhall be ſuffered to deceive the nations no more, his kingdom will be confined to hell.

In our text is contained part of what the voice which John heard uttered upon this occaſion; and in theſe words we may obſerve,

1. To whom this voice is directed, viz. to the holy prophets and apoſtles, and the reſt of the inhabitants of the heavenly world. When God ſhall pour out his wrath upon the antichriſtian church, it will be ſeen, and taken notice of

of by all the inhabitants of heaven, even by holy prophets and apoſtles. Neither will they ſee as unconcerned ſpectators.

2. What they are called upon by the voice to do, viz. to rejoice over Babylon now deſtroyed, and lying under the wrath of God. They are not directed to rejoice over her in proſperity, but in flames, and beholding the ſmoke of her burning aſcending up for ever and ever.

3. A reaſon given: "For God hath avenged you on her;" i. e. God hath executed juſt vengeance upon her, for ſhedding your blood, and cruelly perſecuting you. For thus the matter is repreſented, that antichriſt had been guilty of ſhedding the blood of the holy prophets and apoſtles, as in chap. xvi. 6. "For they have ſhed the blood of ſaints "and of prophets." And in verſ. 24. of this context, "In "her was found the blood of prophets and of ſaints, and "of all them that were ſlain on the earth." Not that antichriſt had literally ſhed the blood of the prophets and apoſtles; but he had ſhed the blood of thoſe who were their followers, who were of the ſame ſpirit, and of the ſame church, and ſame myſtical body, with the prophets and apoſtles. The prophets and apoſtles in heaven are nearly related and united to the ſaints on earth. The prophets and apoſtles do, as it were, live in true Chriſtians in all ages. So that by ſlaying theſe, perſecutors ſhow that they would ſlay the prophets and apoſtles, if they could; and they indeed do it as much as in them lies.

On the ſame account, Chriſt ſays of the Jews in his time, Luke xi. 50. "That the blood of all the prophets, which was "ſhed from the foundation of the world, may be required "of this generation; from the blood of Abel, unto the blood "of Zacharias, which periſhed between the altar and the "temple: verily I ſay unto you, it ſhall be required of this "generation." So Chriſt himſelf is ſaid to have been crucified in the antichriſtian church, chap. xi. 8. "And their "dead bodies ſhall lie in the ſtreet of the great city, which "ſpiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where alſo our "Lord was crucified." So all the inhabitants of heaven, all the ſaints from the beginning of the world, and the angels alſo, are called upon to rejoice over Babylon, becauſe of God's vengeance upon her, wherein he avenges them: they all of them had in effect been injured and perſecuted by antichriſt. Indeed they are not called upon to rejoice in having their revenge glutted, but in ſeeing juſtice executed, and

and in ſeeing the love and tenderneſs of God towards them, manifeſted in his ſeverity towards their enemies.

DOCTRINE. When the ſaints in glory ſhall ſee the wrath of God executed on ungodly men, it will be no occaſion of grief to them, but of rejoicing.

It is not only the ſight of God's wrath executed on thoſe wicked men who are of the antichriſtian church, which will be occaſion of rejoicing to the ſaints in glory; but alſo the ſight of the deſtruction of all God's enemies: whether they have been the followers of antichriſt or not, that alters not the caſe, if they have been the enemies of God, and of Jeſus Chriſt. All wicked men will at laſt be deſtroyed together, as being united in the ſame cauſe and intereſt, as being all of Satan's army. They will all ſtand together at the day of judgement, as being all of the ſame company.

And if we underſtand the text to have reſpect only to a temporal execution of God's wrath on his enemies; that will not alter the caſe. The thing that they are called upon to rejoice at, is the execution of God's wrath upon his and their enemies. And if it be matter of rejoicing to them to ſee juſtice executed in part upon them, or to ſee the beginning of the execution of it in this world; for the ſame reaſon will they rejoice with greater joy, in beholding it fully executed. For the thing here mentioned as the foundation of their joy, is the execution of juſt vengeance: *Rejoice, for God hath avenged you on her.*

Prop. 1. The glorified ſaints will ſee the wrath of God executed upon ungodly men. This the ſcriptures plainly teach us, that the righteous and the wicked in the other world ſee each other's ſtate. Thus the rich man in hell, and Lazarus and Abraham in heaven, are repreſented as ſeeing each other's oppoſite ſtates, in the 16th chap. of Luke. The wicked in their miſery will ſee the ſaints in the kingdom of heaven; Luke xiii. 28. 29. "There ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth, when ye ſhall ſee Abraham, "and Iſaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourſelves thruſt out."

So the ſaints in glory will ſee the miſery of the wicked under the wrath of God. Iſa. lxvi. 24. "And they ſhall "go forth, and look on the carcaſes of the men that have "tranſgreſſed againſt me: for their worm ſhall not die, "neither

" neither ſhall their fire be quenched." And, Rev. xiv. 9. 10. " If any man worſhip the beaſt and his image, and " receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the " ſame ſhall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which " is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indig- " nation; and he ſhall be tormented with fire and brim- " ſtone, *in the preſence of the holy angels*, and *in the pre-* " *ſence of the Lamb*." The ſaints are not here mentioned, as being included in the Lamb, as his members. The church is the fulneſs of Chriſt, and is called Chriſt, 1 Cor. xii. 12. So in the 19th chapter, verſ. 2. 3. the ſmoke of Babylon's torment is repreſented as riſing up for ever and ever, in the ſight of the heavenly inhabitants.

At the day of judgement, the ſaints in glory at Chriſt's right hand, will ſee the wicked at the left hand in their amazement and horror, will hear the Judge pronounce ſentence upon them, ſaying, Depart, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; and will ſee them go away into everlaſting puniſhment. But the ſcripture ſeems to hold forth to us, that the ſaints will not only ſee the miſery of the wicked at the day of judgement, but the fore-mentioned texts imply, that the ſtate of the damned in hell will be in the view of the heavenly inhabitants; that the two worlds of happineſs and miſery will be in view of each other. Though we know not by what means, nor after what manner it will be; yet the ſcriptures certainly lead us to think, that they will ſome way or other have a direct and immediate apprehenſion of each other's ſtate. The ſaints in glory will ſee how the damned are tormented; they will ſee God's threatenings fulfilled, and his wrath executed upon them.

Prop. 2. When they ſhall ſee it, it will be no occaſion of grief to them, but of rejoicing. The miſeries of the damned in hell will be inconceivably great. When they ſhall come to bear the wrath of the Almighty poured out upon them without mixture, and executed upon them without pity or reſtraint, or any mitigation; it will doubtleſs cauſe anguiſh, and horror, and amazement vaſtly beyond all the ſufferings and torments, that ever any man endured in this world; yea, beyond all extent of our words or thoughts. For God in executing wrath upon ungodly men will act like an Almighty God, like an Almighty God enraged. The ſcripture calls this wrath, God's *fury*, and the *fierceneſs of his wrath*; and we are told that this is to ſhow

ſhow God's wrath, and to make his power known; or to make known how dreadful his wrath and how great his power is.

The ſaints in glory will ſee this, and be far more ſenſible of it than now we can poſſibly be. They will be far more ſenſible how dreadful the wrath of God is, and will better underſtand how terrible the ſufferings of the damned are; yet this will be no occaſion of grief to them, but of rejoicing. They will not be ſorry for the damned; it will cauſe no uneaſineſs or diſſatisfaction to them; but on the contrary, when they have this ſight, it will occaſion rejoicing, and excite them to joyful praiſes.

Here I ſhall (1.) mention two things which are evidences that it is ſo. (2.) Give ſome reaſons why it is ſo. (3.) Anſwer an objection.

I. Theſe two things are evidences of it:

1. That the ſeeing of the wrath of God executed upon the damned, ſhould cauſe grief in the ſaints in glory, is inconſiſtent with that ſtate of perfect happineſs in which they are. There can no ſuch thing as grief enter, to be an allay to the happineſs and joy of that world of bleſſedneſs. Grief is an utter ſtranger in that world, and may in no wiſe be admitted thither. God hath promiſed that he will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there ſhall be no more ſorrow. Rev. xxi. 4. and chap. vii. 17.

2. The ſaints in heaven poſſeſs all things as their own, and therefore all things contribute to their joy and happineſs. The ſcriptures teach that the ſaints in glory inherit all things. This God ſaid in John's hearing, when he had the viſion of the New Jeruſalem; Rev. xxi. 7. And the ſcriptures teach us to underſtand this abſolutely of all the works of creation and providence. 1 Cor. iii. 21. 22. "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, "or the world, or life, or death, or things preſent, or "things to come; all are yours." Here the apoſtle teaches, that all things in the world to come, or in the future and eternal world, are the ſaints; not only life but death; men and angels, and devils, are the ſaints; heaven and hell are their's, to contribute to their joy and happineſs. Therefore the damned and their miſery will be the ſaints; their ſufferings and the wrath of God poured out upon them, will be an occaſion of joy to them. If there were any thing whatſoever that did not contribute to their joy, but

cauſed grief, then there would be ſome thing which would not be their's.

That the torments of the damned are no matter of grief, but of joy to the inhabitants of heaven, is very clearly expreſſed in ſeveral paſſages of this book of Revelation; particularly by chap. xvi. 5. 6. 7. and chap. xix. at the beginning.

II. I ſhall now give ſome reaſons why it is ſo.

1. Negatively; it will not be becauſe the ſaints in heaven are the ſubjects of any ill diſpoſition; but on the contrary, this rejoicing of their's will be the fruit of an amiable and excellent diſpoſition; it will be the fruit of a perfect holineſs and conformity to Chriſt, the holy Lamb of God, as we ſhall ſhow by and by. The devil delights in the miſery of men from cruelty, and from envy and revenge, and becauſe he delights in any creature's miſery, for its own ſake, from a malicious diſpoſition.

But it will be from exceedingly different principles, and for quite other reaſons, that the juſt damnation of the wicked will be an occaſion of rejoicing to the ſaints in glory. It will not be becauſe they delight in ſeeing the miſery of others abſolutely conſidered. The damned's ſuffering divine vengeance will be no occaſion of joy to the ſaints merely as it is the miſery of others, or becauſe it is pleaſant to them to behold the miſery of others merely for its own ſake. The rejoicing of the ſaints on this occaſion is no argument, that the ſaints are not of a moſt amiable and excellent ſpirit, or that there is any defect on that account, that there is any thing wanting, which would render them of a more amiable diſpoſition. It is no argument that they have not a ſpirit of goodneſs and love reigning in them in abſolute perfection, or that herein they do not excel the greateſt inſtances of it on earth, as much as the ſtars are higher than the earth, or the ſun brighter than a glow-worm.

And whereas the heavenly inhabitants are in the text called upon to rejoice over Babylon, becauſe God had avenged them on her; it is not to be underſtood, that they are to rejoice in having their revenge glutted, but to rejoice in ſeeing the juſtice of God executed, and in ſeeing his love to them in executing it on his enemies.

2. I now proceed to obſerve poſitively,

(1.) The ſufferings of the damned will be no occaſion of grief

grief to the heavenly inhabitants, as they will have no love nor pity to the damned. Although they will be of a perfectly amiable and divine diſpoſition, full of divine love, yet they will have no love to the damned. It will be no argument of want of a ſpirit of love in them, that they do not love the damned; for the heavenly inhabitants will know that it is not fit that they ſhould love them, becauſe they will know then, that God has no love to them, nor pity for them; but that they are the objects of God's eternal hatred. And they will then be perfectly conformed to God in their wills and affections. They will love what God loves, and that only. However the ſaints in heaven may have loved the damned while here, eſpecially thoſe of them who were near and dear to them in this world, they will have no love to them hereafter.

(2.) It will be an occaſion of their rejoicing, as the glory of God will appear in it. The glory of God appears in all his works; and therefore there is no work of God which the ſaints in glory ſhall behold and contemplate, but what will be an occaſion of rejoicing to them. God greatly glorifies himſelf in the eternal damnation of ungodly men. They are appointed to be veſſels of wrath for this end, that God may glorify himſelf in their deſtruction. God glorifies himſelf in all that he doth; but he glorifies himſelf principally in his eternal diſpoſal of his intelligent creatures, ſome to everlaſting life, and others to everlaſting death.

The ſaints in heaven will be perfect in their love to God: their hearts will be all a flame of love to God, and therefore they will greatly value the glory of God, and will exceedingly delight in ſeeing him glorified. The ſaints highly value the glory of God here in this, but how much more will they ſo do in the world to come. They will therefore greatly rejoice in all that contributes to that glory. The glory of God will in their eſteem be a thing of greater conſequence, than the welfare of thouſands and millions of ſouls.——Particularly,

[1.] They will rejoice in ſeeing the juſtice of God glorified in the ſufferings of the damned. The miſery of the damned, dreadful as it is, is but what juſtice requires. They in heaven will ſee and know it much more clearly, than any of us do here. They will ſee how perfectly juſt and righteous their puniſhment is, and therefore how properly inflicted by the ſupreme Governor of the world. They will greatly rejoice to ſee juſtice take place, to ſee that all

the ſin and wickedneſs that have been committed in the world, is remembered of God, and has its due puniſhment. The ſight of this ſtrict and immutable juſtice of God will render God amiable and adorable in their eyes. They will rejoice when they ſee him who is their Father and eternal portion, ſo glorious in his juſtice.

Then there will be no remaining difficulties about the juſtice of God, about the abſolute decrees of God, or any thing pertaining to the diſpenſations of God towards men. But the juſtice of God in the deſtruction of the wicked will then appear as light without darkneſs, and will ſhine as the ſun without clouds, and on this account will they ſing joyful ſongs of praiſe to God, as we ſee the ſaints and angels do, when God pours the vials of his wrath upon antichriſt; Rev. xvi. 5. 6. 7. They ſing joyfully to God on this account, that true and righteous are his judgements; Rev. xix. 1.—6. They ſeeing God ſo ſtrictly juſt, this will make them value his love the more. Mercy and grace are more valuable on this account. The more they ſhall ſee of the juſtice of God, the more will they prize and rejoice in his love.

[2.] They will rejoice in it, as it will be a glorious manifeſtation of the power and majeſty of God. God will ſhow his own greatneſs in executing vengeance on ungodly men. This will be a glorious manifeſtation of God's power. This is mentioned as one end of the deſtruction of the ungodly; "What if God, willing to ſhow his "wrath, and make his power known, endured with much "long-ſuffering, the veſſels of wrath fitted to deſtruction?" God will hereby ſhow how much he is above his enemies. There are many now in the world, who proudly lift up themſelves againſt God. There are many open oppoſers of the cauſe and intereſt of Chriſt. "They ſet their mouth a-"gainſt the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the "earth." Then God will ſhow his glorious power in deſtroying theſe enemies.

The power of God is ſometimes ſpoken of as very glorious, as appearing in the temporal deſtruction of his enemies; as in overthrowing Pharaoh and his hoſt at the Red ſea: Exod. xv. 6. "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become "glorious in power; thy right hand, O Lord, hath daſh-"ed in pieces the enemy." But how much more glorious will it appear in his triumphing over, and daſhing in pieces at once, all his enemies, wicked men and devils together, all

all his haughty foes! The power of God will gloriouſly appear in daſhing to pieces his enemies as a potter's veſſel.

Moſes rejoiced and ſang when he ſaw God glorify his power in the deſtruction of Pharaoh and his hoſt at the Red ſea. But how much more will the ſaints in glory rejoice, when they ſhall ſee God gloriouſly triumphing over all his enemies in their eternal ruin! There will be a glorious manifeſtation of God's awful majeſty, when the vengeance of God ſhall be executed upon his enemies. Then it will appear how dreadful God is, and how dreadful a thing it is to diſobey and contemn him. It is often mentioned as a part of the glory of God, that he is a terrible God. To ſee the majeſty, and greatneſs, and terribleneſs of God, appearing in the deſtruction of his enemies, will cauſe the ſaints to rejoice; and when they ſhall ſee how great and terrible a being God is, how will they prize his favour! how will they rejoice that they are the objects of his love! how will they praiſe him the more joyfully, that he ſhould chuſe them to be his children, and to live in the enjoyment of him!

(3.) It will occaſion rejoicing in them, as they will have the greater ſenſe of their own happineſs, by ſeeing the contrary miſery. It is the nature of pleaſure and pain, of happineſs and miſery, greatly to heighten the ſenſe of each other. Thus the ſeeing of the happineſs of others tends to make men more ſenſible of their own calamities; and the ſeeing of the calamities of others tends to heighten the ſenſe of our own enjoyments.

When the ſaints in glory, therefore, ſhall ſee the doleful ſtate of the damned, how will this heighten their ſenſe of the bleſſedneſs of their own ſtate, ſo exceedingly different from it! When they ſhall ſee how miſerable others of their fellow-creatures are, who are of the ſame nature with themſelves, and were naturally in the ſame circumſtances with themſelves; when they ſhall ſee the ſmoke of their torment, and the raging of the flames of their burning, and hear their dolorous ſhrieks and cries, and conſider that they in the mean time are at eaſe, and not only ſo, but are in the moſt bliſsful ſtate, and ſhall ſurely be in it to all eternity; how will they rejoice!

(4.) This will give them a joyful ſenſe of the grace and love of God to them, becauſe hereby they will ſee how great a benefit they have by it. When they ſhall ſee the dreadful miſeries of the damned, and conſider that they deſerved the ſame miſery, and that it was ſovereign grace, and nothing

thing elſe, which made them ſo much to differ from the damned, that, if it had not been for that, they would have been in the ſame condition; but that God from all eternity was pleaſed to ſet his love upon them, that Chriſt hath laid down his life for them, and hath made them thus glorioufly happy for ever, O how will they admire that dying love of Chriſt, which has redeemed them from ſo great miſery, and purchaſed for them ſo great happineſs, and has ſo diſtinguiſhed them from others of their fellow-creatures! How joyfully will they ſing to God and the Lamb, when they behold this! This is mentioned as one end of the damnation of the wicked, in Rom. ix. 22. 23.

SER.

SERMON XXIII.

The Torments of the Wicked in Hell, no Occaſion of Grief to the Saints in Heaven.

REV. xviii. 20.

Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apoſtles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her.

DOCTRINE. WHen the ſaints in glory ſhall ſee the wrath of God executed on ungodly men, it will be no occaſion of grief to them, but of rejoicing.

I have already endeavoured to explain and prove this doctrine, and now proceed, as was propoſed,

III. To anſwer an objection, viz. If we are apprehenſive of the damnation of others now, it in no wiſe becomes us to rejoice at it, but to lament it. If we ſee others in imminent danger of going to hell, it is accounted a very ſorrowful thing, and it is looked upon as an argument of a ſenſeleſs and wicked ſpirit, to look upon it otherwiſe. When it is a very dead time with reſpect to religion, and a very degenerate and corrupt time among a people, it is accounted a thing greatly to be lamented; and on this account, that at ſuch times there are but few converted and ſaved, and many periſh. Paul tells us, that he had great heavineſs and continual ſorrow in his heart, becauſe ſo many of the Jews were in a periſhing ſtate: Rom. ix. 1. 2. 3. "I ſay the truth in Chriſt, I "lie not, my conſcience alſo bearing me witneſs in the Holy "Ghoſt, that I have great heavineſs and continual ſorrow "in my heart. For I could wiſh that myſelf were accurſed "from Chriſt, for my brethren my kinſmen according to the "fleſh." And if any of our neighbours die, and his death be attended with circumſtances which look darkly as to the ſtate

ſtate of his ſoul, we account it a ſorrowful thing, becauſe he hath left us no more comfortable grounds to hope for his ſalvation. Why, is it not then an unbecoming thing in the ſaints in glory to rejoice when they ſee the damnation of the ungodly?

Anſ. 1. It is now our duty to love all men, though they are wicked; but it will not be a duty to love wicked men hereafter. Chriſt, by many precepts in his word, hath made it our duty to love all men. We are commanded to love wicked men, and our enemies and perſecutors. But this command doth not extend to the ſaints in glory, with reſpect to the damned in hell. Nor is there the ſame reaſon that it ſhould. We ought now to love all, and even wicked men, becauſe we know not but that God loves them. However wicked any man is, yet we know not but that he is one whom God loved from eternity; we know not but that Chriſt loved him with a dying love, had his name upon his heart before the world was, and had reſpect to him when he endured thoſe bitter agonies on the croſs. We know not but that he is to be our companion in glory to all eternity.

But this is not the caſe in another world. The ſaints in glory will know concerning the damned in hell, that God never loved them, but that he hates them, and reprobated them from all eternity. They will alſo know, that the damned will be for ever hated of God. This hatred of God will be fully declared to them; they will ſee it, and will ſee the fruits of it in their torment and miſery. Therefore, when God has thus declared his hatred of the damned, and the ſaints ſee it, it will be no way becoming in the ſaints to love them, nor to mourn over them. It becomes the ſaints fully and perfectly to conſent to what God doth, without any reluctance or oppoſition of ſpirit; yea, it becomes them to rejoice in every thing that God, in holy ſovereignty, ſees meet to be done.

Anſ. 2. We ought now to ſeek and be concerned for the ſalvation of wicked men, becauſe now they are capable ſubjects of it. Wicked men, though they may be very wicked, yet are capable ſubjects of mercy. It is yet a day of grace with them, and they have the offers of ſalvation. Chriſt is as yet ſeeking their ſalvation; he is calling upon them, inviting and wooing them; he ſtands at the door and knocks. He is uſing many means with them, is calling them, ſaying, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" The day of his patience is yet continued to them; and if Chriſt is ſeeking their ſalvation, ſurely we ought to ſeek it.

God

God is wont now to make men the means of one another's ſalvation; yea, it is his ordinary way ſo to do. He makes the concern and endeavours of his people the means of bringing home many to Chriſt. Therefore they ought to be concerned for and endeavour it. But it will not be ſo in another world: for there wicked men will be no longer capable ſubjects of mercy. The ſaints will know, that it is the will of God that the wicked ſhould be miſerable to all eternity. It will therefore ceaſe to be their duty any more to ſeek their ſalvation, or to be concerned about their miſery. On the other hand, it will be their duty to rejoice in the will and glory of God. It is not our duty to be ſorry that God hath executed juſt vengeance on the devils, concerning whom the will of God in their eternal ſtate is already known to us.

Anſ. 3. The evil of rejoicing at the calamities of others now, conſiſts not in rejoicing on the ſame grounds as the ſaints in glory do. The evil of rejoicing at others calamities now, conſiſts in rejoicing at others miſeries ſimply conſidered, or for its own ſake, and becauſe our envy, or revenge, or ſome ſuch diſpoſition, is gratified therein; and not in rejoicing that God is glorified, that the majeſty and juſtice of God glorioufly ſhine forth.

Anſ. 4. The different circumſtances of our nature now, from what will be hereafter, make that a virtue now which will be no virtue then. For inſtance, if a man be of a virtuous diſpoſition, the circumſtances of our nature now are ſuch, that it will neceſſarily ſhow itſelf by natural affection, and to be without natural affection is a very vitious diſpoſition; and is ſo mentioned in Rom. i. 31. But natural affection is no virtue in the ſaints in glory. Their virtue will exerciſe itſelf in an higher manner.

Anſ. 5. The vengeance inflicted on many of the wicked will be a manifeſtation of God's love to the ſaints. One way whereby God ſhows his love to the ſaints, is by deſtroying their enemies. God hath ſaid, "He that toucheth "you, toucheth the apple of mine eye." And it is often mentioned in ſcripture, as an inſtance of the great love of God to his people, that his wrath is ſo awakened, when they are wronged and injured. Thus Chriſt hath promiſed that God will avenge his own elect, Luke xviii. 7.; and hath ſaid, that if any man offend one of his little ones, it were better for him that a millſtone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the ſea, Matth. xviii. 6.

So the ſaints in glory will ſee the great love of God to them, in the dreadful vengeance which he ſhall inflict on thoſe who have injured and perſecuted them; and the view of this love of God to them will be juſt cauſe of their rejoicing. Thus, in the text, heaven and the holy apoſtles and prophets are called to rejoice over their enemies, becauſe God hath avenged them of them.

APPLICATION.

I ſhall apply this ſubject only in one uſe, viz. of *warning* to ungodly men. And in order to this, I deſire ſuch to conſider,

1. How deſtitute of any comforting conſideration your condition will be, if you periſh at laſt. You will have none to pity you. Look which way you will, before or behind, on the right hand or left, look up to heaven, or look about you in hell, and you will ſee none to condole your caſe, or to exerciſe any pity towards you, in your dreadful condition. You muſt bear theſe flames, you muſt bear that torment and amazement, day and night, for ever, and never have the comfort of conſidering, that there is ſo much as one that pities your caſe; there never will one tear be dropped for you.

(1.) You have now been taught that you will have no pity from the created inhabitants of heaven. If you ſhall look to them, you will ſee them all rejoicing at the ſight of the glory of God's juſtice, power, and terrible majeſty, manifeſted in your torment. You will ſee them in a bliſsful and glorious ſtate; you will ſee Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God; you will ſee many come from the eaſt, and from the weſt, and from the north, and from the ſouth, and ſit down in that glorious kingdom; and will ſee them all with one voice, and with united joy, praiſing God for glorifying himſelf in your deſtruction. You will wail and gnaſh your teeth under your own torments, and with envy of their happineſs; but they will rejoice and ſing: Iſa. lxv. 13. 14. "Therefore thus ſaith the Lord, Behold, my ſervants ſhall eat, but ye ſhall be hungry: behold, my ſervants ſhall drink, but ye ſhall be thirſty: behold, my ſervants ſhall rejoice, but ye ſhall be aſhamed: behold, my ſervants ſhall ſing for joy of heart, but ye ſhall cry for ſorrow of heart, and ſhall howl for vexation of ſpirit."

(2.) God

(2.) God will exerciſe no pity towards you. If you might have his pity in any degree, that would be of more worth to you than thouſands of worlds. That would make your caſe to be not without comfort and hope. But God will exerciſe no pity towards you. He hath often ſaid concerning wicked men, that his eye ſhall not ſpare, neither will he have pity, Ezek. v. 11. and vii. 4. 9. and viii. 18. He will caſt upon you, and not ſpare; you will ſee nothing in God, and receive nothing from him, but perfect hatred, and the fierceneſs of his wrath; nothing but the mighty falls or outpourings of wrath upon you every moment; and no cries will avail to move God to any pity, or in the leaſt to move him to lighten his hand, or aſſuage the fierceneſs and abate the power of your torments.

Jeſus Chriſt, the Redeemer, will have no pity on you. Though he had ſo much love to ſinners, as to be willing to lay down his life for them, and offers you the benefits of his blood, while you are in this world, and often calls upon you to accept them; yet then he will have no pity upon you. You never will hear any more inſtructions from him; he will utterly refuſe to be your inſtructor: on the contrary, he will be your judge, to pronounce ſentence againſt you.

(3.) You will find none that will pity you in hell. The devils will not pity you, but will be your tormentors, as roaring lions, or hell-hounds, to tear you in pieces continually. And other wicked men who ſhall be there will be like devils; they will have no pity on you, but will hate and curſe you, and torment you. And you yourſelves will be like devils; you will be like devils to yourſelves, and will be your own tormentors.

2. Conſider what an aggravation, what you have heard under this doctrine will be to your miſery. Conſider how it will be at the day of judgement, when you ſhall ſee Chriſt coming in the clouds of heaven, when you ſhall begin to wail and cry, as knowing that you are of thoſe who are to be condemned; and perhaps you will be ready to fly to ſome of your godly friends; but you will obtain no help from them: you will ſee them unconcerned for you, with joyful countenances aſcending to meet the Lord, and not the leſs joyful for the horror in which they ſee you. And when you ſhall ſtand before the dreadful tribunal at the left hand, among devils, trembling and aſtoniſhed, and ſhall have the dreadful ſentence paſſed upon you, you will at the ſame time ſee the bleſſed company of ſaints and angels at the

right hand rejoicing, and ſhall hear them ſhout forth the praiſes of God, while they hear your ſentence pronounced. You will then ſee thoſe godly people, with whom you ſhall have been acquainted, and who ſhall have been your neighbours, and with whom you now often converſe, rejoicing at the pronunciation and execution of your ſentence.

Perhaps there are now ſome godly people, to whom you are near and dear, who are tenderly concerned for you, are ready to pity you under all calamities, and willing to help you; and particularly are tenderly concerned for your poor ſoul, and have put up many fervent prayers for you. How will you bear to hear theſe ſinging for joy of heart, while you are crying for ſorrow of heart, and howling for vexation of ſpirit, and even ſinging the more joyfully for the glorious juſtice of God which they behold in your eternal condemnation!

You that have had godly parents, who in this world have tenderly loved you, who were wont to look upon your welfare as their own, and were wont to be grieved for you when any thing calamitous befel you in this world, and eſpecially were greatly concerned for the good of your ſouls, and induſtriouſly ſought, and prayed earneſtly for the ſalvation of them; how will you bear to ſee them in the kingdom of God, crowned with glory? Or how will you bear to ſee them receiving the bleſſed ſentence, and going up with ſhouts and ſongs, to enter with Chriſt into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, while you are amongſt a company of devils, and are turned away with the moſt bitter cries, to enter into everlaſting burnings, prepared for the devil and his angels? How will you bear to ſee your parents, who in this life had ſo dear an affection for you, now without any love to you, approving the ſentence of condemnation, when Chriſt ſhall with wrath and indignation bid you depart, wretched curſed creatures, into eternal burnings? How will you bear to ſee and hear them praiſing the Judge, for his juſtice exerciſed in pronouncing this ſentence, and hearing it with an holy joy in their countenances, and ſhouting forth the praiſes and hallelujahs of God and Chriſt on that account?

When they ſhall ſee what manifeſtations of amazement there will be in you, at the hearing of this dreadful ſentence, and that every ſyllable of it pierces you like a thunderbolt, and ſinks you into the loweſt depths of horror and deſpair: when they ſhall behold you with a frighted, amazed

zed countenance, trembling and aſtoniſhed, and ſhall hear you groan and gnaſh your teeth; theſe things will not move them at all to pity you, but you will ſee them with an holy joyfulneſs in their countenances, and with ſongs in their mouths. When they ſhall ſee you turned away and beginning to enter into the great furnace, and ſhall ſee how you ſhrink at it, and hear how you ſhriek and cry out; yet they will not be at all grieved for you, but at the ſame time you will hear from them renewed praiſes and hallelujahs for the true and righteous judgements of God, in ſo dealing with you.

Then you will doubtleſs remember how thoſe your glorified parents ſeemed to be concerned for your ſalvation, while you were here in this world; you will remember how they were wont to counſel and warn you, and how little you regarded their counſels, and how they ſeemed to be concerned and grieved, that there appeared no more effect of their endeavours for the good of your ſouls. You will then ſee them praiſing God for executing juſt vengeance on you, for ſetting ſo light by their counſels and reproofs. However here they loved you and were concerned for you, now they will riſe up in judgement againſt you, and will declare how your ſins are aggravated by the endeavours which they to no purpoſe uſed with you, to bring you to forſake ſin and practiſe virtue, and to ſeek and ſerve God; but you were obſtinate under all, and would not hearken to them. They will declare how inexcuſable you are upon this account. And when the Judge ſhall execute the more terrible wrath upon you on this account, that you have made no better improvement of your parents inſtructions, they will joyfully praiſe God for it. After they ſhall have ſeen you lie in hell thouſands of years, and your torment ſhall yet continue without any reſt, day or night; they will not begin to pity you then; they will praiſe God, that his juſtice appears in the eternity of your miſery.

You that have godly huſbands, or wives, or brethren, or ſiſters, with whom you have been wont to dwell under the ſame roof, and to eat at the ſame table, conſider how it will be with you, when you ſhall come to part with them; when they ſhall be taken and you left; Luke xvii. 34. 35. 36. "I tell you, in that night, there ſhall be two men in "one bed; the one ſhall be taken and the other left. Two "women ſhall be grinding together; the one ſhall be taken "and the other left. Two men ſhall be in the field; the "one ſhall be taken and the other left." However you may

may wail and lament, when you ſee them parted from you, they being taken and you left, you will ſee in them no ſigns of ſorrow, that you are not taken with them, that you aſcend not with them to meet the Lord in the air, but are left below to be conſumed with the world, which is reſerved unto fire, againſt the day of the perdition of ungodly men.

Thoſe wicked men, who ſhall go to hell from under the labours of pious and faithful miniſters, will ſee thoſe miniſters rejoicing and praiſing God upon the occaſion of their deſtruction. Conſider ye that have long lived under Mr *Stoddard's* miniſtry, and are yet in a natural condition, how dreadful it will be to you, to ſee him who was ſo tenderly concerned for the good of your ſouls while he was here, and ſo earneſtly ſought your ſalvation, to ſee him riſing up in judgement againſt you, declaring your inexcuſableneſs, declaring how often he warned you; how plainly he ſet your danger before you, and told you of the opportunity that you had; how fully he ſet forth the miſerable condition in which you were, and the neceſſity there was that you ſhould obtain an intereſt in Chriſt; how movingly and earneſtly he exhorted you to get into a better ſtate, and how regardleſs you were all; how little you minded all that he ſaid to you; how you went on ſtill in your treſpaſſes, hardened your necks, and made your hearts as an adamant, and refuſed to return! How dreadful will it be to you to hear him declaring how inexcuſable you are upon theſe accounts! How will you be cut to the heart, when you ſhall ſee him approving the ſentence of condemnation, which the Judge ſhall pronounce againſt you, and judging and ſentencing you with Chriſt, as an aſſeſſor in judgement; for the ſaints ſhall judge the world, (1 Cor. vi. 2.); and when you ſhall ſee him rejoicing in the execution of juſtice upon you for all your unprofitableneſs under his miniſtry!

3. Conſider what an happy opportunity you have in your hands now. Now your caſe is very different from the caſe of wicked men in another world, of which you have now heard; and particularly in the following reſpects.

(1.) God makes it the duty of all the godly now to be concerned for your ſalvation. As to thoſe who are damned in hell, the ſaints in glory are not concerned for their welfare, and have no love nor pity towards them; and if you periſh hereafter, it will be an occaſion of joy to all the godly.

godly. But now God makes it the duty of all the godly, to love you with a ſincere good-will and earneſt affection. God doth not excuſe men from loving you, for your ill qualities: though you are wicked and undeſerving, yet God makes it the duty of all ſincerely to wiſh well to you; and it is an heinous ſin in the ſight of God, for any to hate you. He requires all to be concerned for your ſalvation, and by all means to ſeek it. It is their duty now to lament your danger, and to pray for mercy to you, that you may be converted and brought home to Chriſt.

Now the godly who know you, deſire your ſalvation, and are ready to ſeek it and pray for it. If you be now in diſtreſs about the condition of your ſouls, you are not in ſuch a forſaken, helpleſs condition, as thoſe that are damned; but you may find many to pray for you, many who are willing to aſſiſt you by their advice and counſels, and all with a tender concern, and with hearty wiſhes that your ſouls may proſper. Now ſome of you have godly friends who are near and dear to you; you are beloved of thoſe who have a great intereſt in heaven, and who have power with God by their prayers: you have the bleſſing of living under the ſame roof with them. Some of you have godly parents to pray for you, and to counſel and inſtruct you, who you may be ſure will do it with ſincere love and concern for you. And there is not only the command of God, God hath not only made it the duty of others to ſeek your ſalvation, but hath given encouragement to others to ſeek it. He gives encouragement that they may obtain help for you by their prayers, and that they may be inſtrumental of your ſpiritual good. God reveals it to be his manner, to make our ſincere endeavours a mean of each others good. How different is the caſe with you from what it is with thoſe that are already damned! And how happy an opportunity have you in your hands, if you would but improve it!

(2.) Now you live where there is a certain order of men appointed to make it the buſineſs of their lives to ſeek your ſalvation. Now you have miniſters, not to riſe up in judgement againſt you; but in Chriſt's ſtead, to beſeech you to be reconciled to God; 2 Cor. v. 20. God hath not only made it the duty of all to wiſh well to your ſouls, and occaſionally to endeavour to promote your ſpiritual intereſts, but he hath inſtituted a certain order of men, and ſet apart certain perſons, to make it their whole work, in which they ſhould ſpend their days and their ſtrength.

(3.) Chriſt

(3.) Chriſt himſelf is now ſeeking your ſalvation. He ſeeks it by the fore-mentioned means, by appointing an order of men to make it their buſineſs to ſeek it: he ſeeks it by them; they are his inſtruments, and they beſeech you in Chriſt's ſtead, to be reconciled to God. He ſeeks it, in commanding your neighbours to ſeek it. Chriſt is repreſented in ſcripture, as wooing the ſouls of ſinners. He uſes means to perſuade them, to chuſe and accept of their own ſalvation. He often invites them to come to him that they may have life, that they may find reſt to their ſouls; to come and take of the water of life freely. He ſtands at the door and knocks; and ceaſes not, though ſinners for a long time refuſe him. He bears repeated repulſes from them, and yet mercifully continues knocking, ſaying, "Open to me, that I may come in and ſup with you, and "you with me." At the doors of many ſinners he ſtands thus knocking for many years together. Chriſt is become a moſt importunate ſuitor to ſinners, that he may become their ſovereign. He is often ſetting before them the need they have of him, the miſerable condition in which they are, and the great proviſion that is made for the good of their ſouls; and he invites them to accept of this proviſion, and promiſes it ſhall be theirs upon their mere acceptance.

Thus how earneſtly did Chriſt ſeek the ſalvation of Jeruſalem, and he wept over it when they refuſed; Luke xix. 41. 42. "And when he was come near, he beheld "the city, and wept over it, ſaying, If thou hadſt known, "even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things which be"long unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine "eyes." And Matth. xxiii. 37. "O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, "thou that killeſt the prophets, and ſtoneſt them which are "ſent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy "children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens "under her wings, and ye would not!" Thus Chriſt is now ſeeking your ſalvation; ſuch an opportunity have you now in your hands! Conſider therefore how many means Chriſt is uſing with you, to bring you to ſalvation.

Beſides thoſe things which have been now mentioned, ſome of you have a degree of the inward ſtrivings and influences of the Spirit, which makes your opportunity much greater. You have Chriſt's internal calls and knockings. All the perſons of the Trinity are now ſeeking your ſalvation. God the Father hath ſent his Son, who hath made way for your ſalvation, and removed all difficulties, except thoſe which are with your own heart. And he is waiting

to

to be gracious to you; the door of his mercy ſtands open to you; he hath ſet a fountain open for you to waſh in from ſin and uncleanneſs. Chriſt is calling, inviting, and wooing you; and the Holy Ghoſt is ſtriving with you by his internal motions and influences.

4. If you now repent, before it be too late, the ſaints and angels in glory will rejoice at your repentance. If you repent not till it is too late, they will, as you have heard, rejoice in ſeeing juſtice executed upon you. But if you now repent, they will rejoice at your welfare, that you who were loſt, are found; that you who were dead, are alive again. They will rejoice that you are come to ſo happy a ſtate already, and that you are in due time to inherit eternal happineſs. Luke xv. 3.—10. So that if now you will improve your opportunity, there will be a very different occaſion of joy in heaven concerning you, than that of which the doctrine ſpeaks; not a rejoicing on occaſion of your miſery, but on occaſion of your unſpeakable bleſſedneſs.

5. If you repent before it is too late, you yourſelves ſhall be of that joyful company. They will be ſo far from rejoicing on occaſion of your ruin, that you yourſelves will be of that glorious company, who will rejoice in all the works of God, who will have all tears wiped away from their eyes, to whom there will be no more death, nor ſorrow, nor crying, and from whom ſorrow and ſighing ſhall flee away. You yourſelves will be of thoſe who will rejoice at the glorious diſplay of God's majeſty and juſtice, in his wrath on his enemies. You will be of thoſe that ſhall ſing for joy of heart at the day of judgement, while others mourn for ſorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of ſpirit; and you will enter into the joy of your Lord, and there ſhall never be any end or abatement of your joy.

SERMON XXIV.*

The Preciouſneſs of Time.

EPHES. v. 16.

Redeeming the Time.

REdeeming ever more hath relation to ſomething which is either loſt, or ſome way gone out of our poſſeſſion, or at leaſt is liable to be loſt, or is about to be taken from us. Theſe words of the apoſtle may be interpreted in various ſenſes. When the apoſtle exhorts the Epheſians to redeem the time, he may have reſpect to their paſt loſs of time. In verſ. 8. of the context, he reminds them how they had formerly miſpent their precious time. "For ye "were ſometimes darkneſs; but now are ye light in the "Lord." He may therefore now adviſe them to *redeem* their time; i. e. to make ſuch a careful uſe of the remainder of their time, as in ſome meaſure to make up for their former loſs.

Or he may have reſpect to the great danger which there was, that time would be loſt by them, becauſe the days were then ſo evil. It being ſo, there was abundant temptation to an ill improvement of time. If they did not take great care, time would ſlip out of their hands, and they would have no benefit by it. They had need therefore to "walk circumſpectly, not as fools but as wiſe," as it is ſaid in the foregoing verſe, that they might ſave their time.

Or, *laſtly*, he may have reſpect to the redeeming of time from thoſe awful calamities which God was about to bring upon the wicked. The apoſtle often foretold terrible judgements that were about to come. And perhaps he adviſes Chriſtians to the greater care in an holy life, and to

* Dated December 1734.

labour

labour to reclaim others from their evil courſes, that ſo God might defer his anger, and time might be redeemed and as it were ſaved from that terrible deſtruction, which when it ſhould come, would put an end to the time of divine patience. And it may be upon this account, that this reaſon is added, *Becauſe the days are evil.* As if the apoſtle had ſaid, the corruption of the times tends to haſten threatened judgements. But your holy and circumſpect walk will tend to redeem time from the devouring jaws of thoſe calamities.

But in which ſenſe ſoever the expreſſion be underſtood, thus much is certainly held forth to us in the words; viz. That upon time we ſhould ſet an high value, and ſhould be exceeding careful that it be not loſt; and are therefore exhorted to exerciſe wiſdom and circumſpection, in order that we may redeem it.

DOCTRINE. Time is exceedingly precious.

Time is precious for the following reaſons.

1. Becauſe an happy or miſerable eternity depends on the good or ill improvement of it. Things are precious in proportion to the importance of them, or according to the degree wherein they concern our welfare. Men are wont to ſet the higheſt value on thoſe things upon which they are ſenſible their intereſt chiefly depends. And this renders time ſo exceedingly precious, becauſe our eternal welfare depends on the improvement of it.

Time is precious upon other accounts. It is precious, becauſe our welfare in this world depends upon the improvement of it. It is precious, becauſe if we improve it not, we ſhall be in danger of coming to poverty and diſgrace. It is precious, becauſe by a good improvement of it, we may obtain thoſe things which will be uſeful and comfortable to us here. But it is above all things precious, as our ſtate through eternity depends upon it. The importance of the improvement of time upon other accounts, is in ſubordination to this, and is little or nothing in compariſon with this.

Gold and ſilver are eſteemed precious by men; but they are of no worth to any man, only as thereby he hath an opportunity of avoiding or removing ſome evil, or of poſſeſſing himſelf of ſome good. And the greater the evil is which any man hath advantage to eſcape, or the good which he hath advantage to obtain, by any thing that

he poſſeſſes, by ſo much the greater is the value of that thing to him, whatever it be. Thus if a man, by any thing which he hath, may ſave his life, which he muſt loſe without it, he will look upon that by which he hath the opportunity of eſcaping ſo great an evil as death, to be very precious So if he have opportunity to obtain a kingdom, it will be of great value in his eſteem.

Hence it is that time is ſo exceedingly precious, becauſe it is by that, that we have opportunity of eſcaping everlaſting miſery, and of obtaining everlaſting bleſſedneſs and glory. It is upon the improvement of time that there depends an eſcape from an infinite evil, and an attainment of infinite good. This puts an infinite value upon time.

2. Time is very ſhort, which is another thing that renders it very precious. The ſcarcity of any commodity occaſions men to ſet an higher value upon it, eſpecially if it be neceſſary and they cannot do without it. Thus when Samaria was beſieged by the Syrians, and proviſions were exceedingly ſcarce, "an aſs's head was ſold for fourſcore "pieces of ſilver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's "dung for five pieces of ſilver." 2 Kings vi. 25.

So time is the more to be prized by men, becauſe a whole eternity depends upon it; and yet we have but a little of time. "When a few years are come, then I ſhall go the "way whence I ſhall not return;" Job xvi. 22. "My days "are ſwifter than a poſt: They are paſſed away as the ſwift "ſhips: as the eagle that haſteth to the prey;" Job ix. 25. 26. Our life; what is it? it is but a vapour which appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away; Jam. iv. 14. It is but a moment to eternity, and bears no proportion to it. Time is ſo ſhort, and the work which we have to do in it is ſo great, that we have none of it to ſpare. The work which we have to do to prepare for eternity, muſt be done in time, or it never can be done; and it is found to be a work of great difficulty and labour, and therefore that for which time is the more requiſite.

3. Time ought to be eſteemed by us very precious upon this account alſo, that we are uncertain of the continuance of it. We know that it is very ſhort, but we know not how ſhort. We know not how little of it remains, whether a year, or ſeveral years, or only a month, a week, or a day. We are every day uncertain whether that day will not be the laſt, or whether we are to have the whole day, or how little of it we are to have. There is nothing that experience doth more verify than this.

Another

Another thing that makes time precious, and upon the account of which we ought to be the more careful not to loſe the leaſt part of it, is, that our everlaſting welfare depends upon the right improvement of time. If a man had proviſion laid up for a journey or a voyage, and knew that he had but little, and at the ſame time knew that if his proviſion ſhould fail, he muſt periſh by the way, he would be the more choice of it.

How much more would many men prize their time, if they knew that they had but a few months, or a few days more to live? And certainly a wiſe man will prize his time the more, as he knows not but that it will be ſo as to himſelf. This is the caſe with multitudes now in the world, who at preſent enjoy health, and ſee no ſigns of approaching death; many ſuch, no doubt, are to die the next month, many the next week, yea, many probably to-morrow, and this next approaching night; yet theſe ſame perſons know nothing of it, and perhaps think nothing of it, and neither they nor their neighbours can ſay that they are more likely ſoon to be taken out of the world than others. And probably there are various perſons now here preſent, hearing what I now ſay, who are to die in a very little time, and yet have no apprehenſion of it. This teaches us how we ought to prize our time, and how careful we ought to be, that we loſe none of it.

4. Time is very precious, becauſe hereafter when it is paſt, it cannot be recovered. There are many things which men poſſeſs, which if they part with, they can obtain them again. If a man have parted with ſomething which he had, not knowing the worth of it, or the need he ſhould have of it; he often can regain it, at leaſt with pains and coſt. If a man have been overſeen in a bargain, and have bartered away or ſold ſomething, and afterwards repent of it, he may often obtain a releaſe, and recover what he had parted with.

But it is not ſo with reſpect to time: when once that is gone, it is gone for ever; no pains, no coſt will recover it. Though we repent ever ſo much that we let it paſs, and did not improve it while we had it, it will be to no purpoſe. It is ſo with our time, both in whole, and in every particular part. Every part of it is ſucceſſively offered to us, that we may chuſe, whether we will make it our own, or not. But there is no delay, to wait upon us, and ſee whether or no we will comply with the offer. But if we refuſe, it is immediately taken away, and never offered more. As to that part of time which is gone, however we have

neglected

neglected to improve it, it is out of our poſſeſſion and out of our reach.

If we have lived fifty, or ſixty, or ſeventy years, and have not improved our time, now it cannot be helped; it is eternally gone from us: all that we can do, is to improve the little that remains. Yea, if a man have ſpent all his life but a few moments unimproved, all that is gone is loſt, and only thoſe few remaining moments can poſſibly be made his own; and if the whole of a man's time be gone, and it be all loſt, it is irrecoverable.

Eternity depends on the improvement of time; but when once the time of life is gone, when once death is come, we have no more to do with time; there is no poſſibility of obtaining the reſtoration of it, or another ſpace in which to prepare for eternity. If a man ſhould loſe the whole of his worldly ſubſtance, and become a bankrupt, it is poſſible that his loſs may be made up. He may have another eſtate as good. But when the time of life is gone, it is impoſſible that we ſhould ever obtain another ſuch time. All opportunity of obtaining eternal welfare is utterly and everlaſtingly gone.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. The firſt uſe of this doctrine may be, to put men upon reflecting and inquiring what they have done with their time. You have now heard of the preciouſneſs of time; and you are the perſons concerned; you are ſome of thoſe to whom God hath committed that precious talent. You have an eternity before you. When God created you, and gave you reaſonable ſouls, he made you for an endleſs duration. He gave you time here in order to a preparation for eternity, and your future eternity depends on the improvement of time.

Conſider, therefore, what you have done with your paſt time. You are not now beginning your time, but a great deal is paſt and gone; and all the wit, and power, and treaſure of the univerſe, cannot recover it. There are many of you who may well conclude, that more than half of your time is gone: though you ſhould live to the ordinary age of man, your glaſs is more than half run; and it may be there are but few ſands remaining. Your ſun is paſt the meridian, and perhaps juſt a-ſetting, or going into an everlaſting eclipſe. Conſider, therefore, what account you

can

can give of your improvement of your paſt time. How have you let the precious golden ſands of your glaſs run?

Every *day* that you have enjoyed has been precious; yea, your *moments* have been precious. But have you not waſted your precious moments, your precious days, yea your precious years? If you ſhould reckon up how many days you have lived, what a ſum would there be! and how precious hath every one of thoſe days been! Conſider, therefore, what have you done with them? what is become of them all? What can you ſhow of any improvement made, or good done, or benefit obtained, anſwerable to all this time which you have lived? When you look back, and ſearch, do you not find this paſt time of your lives in a great meaſure empty, having not been filled up with any good improvement? And if God, that hath given you your time, ſhould now call you to an account, what account could you give to him?

How much may be done in a year! how much good is there opportunity to do in ſuch a ſpace of time! How much ſervice may perſons do for God, and how much for their own ſouls, if to their utmoſt they improve it! How much may be done in a day! But what have you done in ſo many days and years that you have lived? What have you done with the whole time of your youth, you that are paſt your youth? What is become of all that precious ſeaſon of life? Hath it not all been in vain to you? Would it not have been as well or better for you, if all that time you had been aſleep, or in a ſtate of non-exiſtence?

You have had much time of leiſure and freedom from worldly buſineſs; conſider to what purpoſe you have ſpent it. You have not only had ordinary time, but you have had a great deal of holy time. What have you done with all the Sabbath-days which you have enjoyed! Conſider thoſe things ſeriouſly, and let your own conſciences make anſwer.

SERMON XXV.

The preciouſneſs of Time.

EPHES. v. 16.

Redeeming the time.

DOCTRINE. TIme is exceedingly precious.

Having, in the former diſcourſe upon theſe words, mentioned ſeveral reaſons why time is precious, I proceeded to make the improvement, and applied this doctrine in one uſe.

2. The next uſe ſhall be of *reproof* to thoſe who loſe or miſpend their time. How little is the preciouſneſs of time conſidered, and how little of a ſenſe of it do the greater part of mankind ſeem to have! and to how little good purpoſe do many ſpend their time! There is nothing more precious, and yet nothing of which men are more prodigal. Time is with many, as ſilver was in the days of Solomon, *as the ſtones of the ſtreet, and nothing accounted of.* They act as if time were as plenty as ſilver was then, and as if they had a great deal more than they needed, and knew not what to do with it.

If men were as laviſh of their money as they are of their time, if it were as common a thing for them to throw away their money, as it is for them to throw away their time, we ſhould think them beſide themſelves, and not in the poſſeſſion of their right minds. Yet time is a thouſand times more precious than money; and when it is gone, cannot be *purchaſed for money*, cannot be redeemed by ſilver or gold.——There are ſeveral ſorts of perſons who are reproved by this doctrine, whom I ſhall particularly mention:

(1.) Thoſe

(1.) Thoſe who ſpend a great part of their time in idleneſs, or in doing nothing, nothing that turns to any account, either for the good of their ſouls or bodies; nothing either for their own benefit, or for the benefit of their neighbour, either of the family or of the body politic to which they belong. There are ſome perſons upon whoſe hands time ſeems to lie heavy, who, inſtead of being concerned to improve it as it paſſes, and taking care that it paſs not without making it their own, act as if it were rather their concern to contrive ways how to waſte and conſume it; as though time, inſtead of being precious, were rather a mere incumbrance to them. Their hands refuſe to labour, and rather than to put themſelves to it, they will let their families ſuffer, and will ſuffer themſelves: Prov. xix. 15. "An "idle ſoul ſhall ſuffer hunger;" Prov. xxiii. 21. "Drowſi- "neſs ſhall clothe a man with rags."

Some ſpend much of their time at the tavern, over their cups, and in wandering about from houſe to houſe, waſting away their hours in idle and unprofitable talk, which will turn to no good account: Prov. xiv. 23. "In all labour "there is profit; but the talk of the lips tendeth only to "poverty." The direction of the apoſtle, in Eph. iv. 28. is, that we ſhould "labour, working with our hands the "thing that is good, that we may have to give to him that "needeth." But indolent men, inſtead of gaining any thing to give to him that needeth, do but waſte what they have already: Prov. xviii. 9. "He that is ſlothful in his work, "is brother to him that is a great waſter."

(2.) They are reproved by this doctrine who ſpend their time in *wickedneſs*, who do not merely ſpend their time in doing nothing to any good purpoſe, but ſpend it to ill purpoſes. Such do not only loſe their time, but they do worſe than loſe it; with it they hurt both themſelves and others.

Time is precious, as we have heard, becauſe eternity depends upon it. By the improvement of time, we have opportunity of eſcaping eternal miſery, and obtaining eternal bleſſedneſs. But thoſe who ſpend their time in wicked works, not only neglect to improve their time to obtain eternal happineſs, or to eſcape damnation, but they ſpend it to a quite contrary purpoſe, viz. to increaſe their eternal miſery, or to render their damnation the more heavy and intolerable.

Some ſpend much time in revelling, and in unclean talk and practices, in vicious company-keeping, in corrupting

and enſnaring the minds of others, ſetting bad examples, and leading others into ſin, undoing not only their own ſouls, but the ſouls of others. Some ſpend much of their precious time in detraction and backbiting, in talking againſt others. Some ſpend much time in contention, not only quarrelling themſelves, but fomenting and ſtirring up ſtrife and contention. It would have been well for ſome men, and well for their neighbours, if they had never done any thing at all; for then they would have done neither good nor hurt. But now they have done a great deal more hurt than they have done or ever will do good. There are ſome perſons whom it would have been better for the towns where they live, to have been at the charge of maintaining them in doing nothing, if that would have kept them in a ſtate of inactivity.

Thoſe who have ſpent much of their time in wickedneſs, if ever they ſhall reform, and enter upon a different mode of ſpending their time, will find, not only that they have waſted their paſt time, but that they have made work for their remaining time, to repent, and undo what they have done. How will many men, when they ſhall have done with time, and ſhall look back upon their paſt lives, wiſh that they had had no time! The time which they ſpend on earth will be worſe to them than if they had ſpent ſo much time in hell; for an eternity of more dreadful miſery in hell will be the fruit of their time on earth, as they employ it.

(3.) Thoſe are reproved by this doctrine, who ſpend their time only in worldly purſuits, neglecting their ſouls. Such men loſe their time, let them be ever ſo diligent in their worldly buſineſs; and though they may be careful not to let any of their time paſs ſo, but that it ſhall, ſome way or other, turn to their worldly profit. They that improve time only for their benefit in time, loſe it; becauſe time was not given for itſelf, but for that everlaſting duration which ſucceeds it.

They, therefore, whoſe time is taken up in caring and labouring for the world only, in inquiring what they ſhall eat, and what they ſhall drink, and wherewithal they ſhall be clothed; in contriving to lay up for themſelves treaſures upon earth, how to enrich themſelves, or how to make themſelves great in the world, or how to live in comfortable and pleaſant circumſtances, while here; who buſy their minds and employ their ſtrength in theſe things only, and the

the ſtream of whoſe affections is directed towards theſe things; they loſe their precious time.

Let ſuch, therefore, as have been guilty of thus ſpending their time, conſider it. You have ſpent a great part of your time, and a great part of your ſtrength, in getting a little of the world; and how little good doth it afford you, now you have gotten it! What happineſs or ſatisfaction can you reap from it? will it give you peace of conſcience, or any rational quietneſs or comfort? What is your poor, needy, periſhing ſoul the better for it? and what better proſpects doth it afford you of your approaching eternity? and what will all that you have acquired avail you when time ſhall be no longer?

3. The third uſe ſhall be of *exhortation*, to improve time to the utmoſt. Conſider what hath been ſaid of the preciouſneſs of time, how much depends upon it, how ſhort and uncertain it is, how irrecoverable it will be when gone. If you have a right conception of theſe things, you will be more choice of your time than of the moſt fine gold. Every hour and moment will ſeem precious to you.——But beſides thoſe conſiderations which have been already ſet before you in the doctrinal part, conſider alſo the following things.

(1.) That you are accountable to God for your time. Time is a talent given us by God; he hath ſet us our day; and it is not for nothing, our day was appointed for ſome work; therefore, doubtleſs, he will, at the day's end, call us to an account. We muſt give account to him of the improvement of all our time. We are God's ſervants; as a ſervant is accountable to his maſter, how he ſpends his time when he is ſent forth to work, ſo are we accountable to God. If men would aright conſider this, and keep it in mind, would they not improve their time otherwiſe than they do? Would you not behave otherwiſe than you do, if you conſidered with yourſelves every morning, that you muſt give an account to God, how you ſhall have ſpent that day? and if you conſidered with yourſelves, at the beginning of every evening, that you muſt give an account to God, how you ſhall have ſpent that evening? Chriſt hath told us, that "for every idle word which men ſpeak, "they ſhall give account in the day of judgement," Matth. xii. 36. How well, therefore, may we conclude, that we muſt give an account of all our idle miſpent time!

(2.) Conſider how much time you have loſt already. For your having loſt ſo much time, you have the greater need

of diligently improving what of your time yet remains. You ought to mourn and lament over your loſt time; but that is not all that you muſt do; you muſt apply yourſelves the more diligently to improve the remaining part of your time, that you may redeem loſt time.

You that are conſiderably advanced in life, and have hitherto ſpent your time in vanities and worldly cares, and have lived in a great meaſure negligent of the intereſts of your ſouls, may well be terrified and amazed, when you think how much time you have loſt and waſted away.—— In that you have loſt ſo much time, you have the more need of diligence, on three accounts.

[1.] As your opportunity is ſo much the ſhorter. Your time at its whole length is ſhort, as hath been ſhown already. But ſet aſide all that you have already loſt, and then how much ſhorter is it! As to that part of your time which you have already loſt, it is not to be reckoned into your opportunity; for that is nulled and deſtroyed; it never will be any more; and it is no better, but worſe to you, than if it never had been.

[2.] You have the ſame work to do that you had at firſt, and that under greater difficulties. Hitherto you have done nothing at all of your work, all remains to be done, and that with vaſtly greater difficulties and oppoſition in your way than would have been if you had ſet about it ſeaſonably. So that the time in which to do your work is not only grown ſhorter, but your work is grown greater. You not only have the ſame work to do, but you have more work; for while you have loſt your time, you have not only ſhortened it, but you have been making work for yourſelves. How well may this conſideration awaken you to a thorough care, not to let things run on in this manner any longer, and rouſe you up immediately to apply yourſelves to your work with all your might?

[3.] That is the beſt of your time which you have loſt. The firſt of a man's time is the beſt of his time, i. e. the firſt after he comes to the exerciſe of his reaſon, and to be capable of performing his work. You that have lived in ſin till paſt your youth, have loſt the beſt of your time. So that here are all theſe things to be conſidered together, viz. that your time in the whole is but ſhort, there is none to ſpare; a great part of that is gone, ſo that it is become much ſhorter; that which is gone is the beſt; yet all your work remains: and not only ſo, but with greater difficulties than

than ever before attended it; and the ſhorter your time is, the more work you have to do.

What will make you ſenſible of the neceſſity of a diligent improvement of remaining time, if theſe things will not? Sometimes ſuch conſiderations as theſe have another effect, viz. to diſcourage perſons, and to make them think, that ſeeing they have loſt ſo much time, it is not worth their while to attempt to do any thing now. The devil makes fools of them; for when they are young, he tells them, there is time enough hereafter, there is no need of being in haſte, it will be better ſeeking ſalvation hereafter; and then they believe him. Afterwards, when their youth is paſt, he tells them, that now they have loſt ſo much of their time, and the beſt of their time, that it is not worth their while to attempt to do any thing; and now they believe him too. So that with them no time is a good time. The time of youth is not a good time; for that is moſt fit for pleaſure and mirth, and there will be time enough afterwards; and the time that is afterwards, when that comes, is not a good time, it will not do, becauſe the beſt of their time is gone. Thus are men infatuated and ruined.

But what madneſs is it for perſons to give way to diſcouragement, ſo as to neglect their work, becauſe their time is ſhort! What need have they rather to awake out of ſleep, thoroughly to rouſe up themſelves, and to be in good earneſt indeed, to be violent, that if poſſible they may yet obtain eternal life! Peradventure God may yet give them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth, that they may be ſaved. Though it be late in the day, yet God calls upon you to rouſe up yourſelves, and to apply yourſelves to your work; and will you not hearken to his counſel in this great affair, rather than to the counſel of your mortal enemy?

(3.) Conſider how time is ſometimes valued by thoſe who are come near to the end of time. What a ſenſe of the preciouſneſs of time have poor ſinners ſometimes, when they are on their deathbeds! Such have ſometimes cried out, *O, a thouſand worlds for an inch of time!* Then time appears to them indeed precious. An inch of time could do them no more good than before, when they were in health, if they had but had a like diſpoſition to improve it; nor indeed ſo much; for a man's time upon a deathbed is attended with far greater diſadvantage for ſuch an improvement as will be for the good of his ſoul, than when he is in health.

But

But the near approach of death makes men ſenſible of the ineſtimable worth of time. Perhaps, when they were in health, they were as inſenſible of the value of time as you are, and were as negligent of it. But how are their thoughts altered now! It is not becauſe they are deceived, that they think time to be of ſuch value, but becauſe their eyes are opened; and it is becauſe you are deceived and blind that you do not think as they do.

(4.) Conſider what a value we may conclude is ſet upon time by thoſe who are paſt the end of time. What thoughts do you think they have of the preciouſneſs of time, who have loſt all their opportunity for obtaining eternal life, and are gone to hell? Though they were very laviſh of their time while they lived, and ſet no great value upon it; yet how have they changed their judgements! How would they value the opportunity which *you* have, if they might but have it granted to *them!* What would they not give for one of your days, under the means of grace!

So will you, firſt or laſt, be convinced of the preciouſneſs of time. But if you be not convinced until you are convinced in the manner in which they are, it will be too late. There are two ways of making men ſenſible of the preciouſneſs of time. One is, by ſhowing them the reaſon of it, and by ſetting before them the reaſon why time muſt be precious, by telling them how much depends on it, how ſhort it is, how uncertain, &c. The other is experience, wherein men are convinced of the preciouſneſs of time, by experimentally finding how much depends on the improvement of time. The latter is the moſt effectual way; for that always convinces, if nothing elſe doth.

But if perſons be not convinced by the former means, the latter will do them no good. If the former be ineffectual, the latter, though it be certain, yet is always too late. Experience never fails to open the eyes of men, though they were never opened before. But if they be firſt opened by that, it is no way to their benefit. Let all therefore be perſuaded to improve their time to their utmoſt.

I ſhall conclude with adviſing to three things in particular.

1. Improve the preſent time without any delay. If you delay and put off the improvement of time, ſtill more time will be loſt; and it will be an evidence that you are not ſenſible of the preciouſneſs of time. Talk not of more convenient ſeaſons hereafter; but improve your time while you

you have it, after the example of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. cxix. 60. "I made haſte, and delayed not to keep thy command-"ments."

2. Be eſpecially careful to improve thoſe parts of time which are moſt precious. Though all time is very precious, yet ſome parts of time are more precious than others; as, particularly, holy time is more precious than common time. Such time is a time of great advantage for our everlaſting welfare; therefore, above all, improve your Sabbaths, and eſpecially the time of public worſhip, which is the moſt precious part of holy time. Loſe not the time either in ſleep, or in careleſſneſs, inattention, and wandering imaginations. How ſottiſh are they who waſte away, not only their common time, but holy time, yea the very time of attendance on the holy ordinances of God!

Again, the time of youth is more precious, on many accounts, than other time. Therefore, if you be in the enjoyment of this time, take heed that you improve it. Let not the precious days and years of youth ſlip away without improvement. A time of the ſtrivings of God's ſpirit is more precious than other time. That is the time when God is near; and we are directed, in Iſa. lv. 6. "To ſeek the "Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while "he is near." Such a time is eſpecially an accepted time, and a day of ſalvation: 2 Cor. vi. 2. "I have heard thee "in a time accepted, and in a day of ſalvation have I ſuc-"coured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, "now is the day of ſalvation."

3. Well improve your time of leiſure from worldly buſineſs. Many perſons have a great deal of ſuch time, and all have ſome. If men be but diſpoſed to it, ſuch time may be improved to great advantage. Such time wherein we are moſt free from cares for the body, and buſineſs of an outward nature, is an happy opportunity for the ſoul. Therefore ſpend not ſuch times unprofitably, nor in ſuch a manner that you will not be able to give a good account thereof to God. Waſte them not away wholly in unprofitable viſits, or uſeleſs diverſions or amuſements. Diverſion ſhould be uſed only in ſubſerviency to buſineſs. So much, and no more ſhould be uſed, as doth moſt fit the mind and body for the work of our general and particular callings.

You have need to improve every talent, advantage, and opportunity, to your utmoſt, while time laſts; for it will ſoon be ſaid concerning you, according to the oath of the angel,

angel, of which we read, in Rev. x. 5. 6. " And the angel " which I ſaw ſtand upon the ſea and upon earth, lifted up " his hand to heaven, and ſware by him that liveth for " ever and ever, who created heaven and the things that " therein are, and the earth and the things that therein are, " and the ſea and the things which are therein, *That there* " *ſhould be time no longer.*"

SER.

SERMON XXVI.*

The Sin and Folly of depending on future Time.

PROV. xxvii. 1.

Boaſt not thyſelf of to-morrow; for thou knoweſt not what a day may bring forth.

THE deſign of the wiſe man in this book of Proverbs, is to give us the precepts of true wiſdom, or to teach us how to conduct ourſelves wiſely in the courſe of our lives. Wiſdom very much conſiſts in making a wiſe improvement of time, and of the opportunities we enjoy. This is often in ſcripture ſpoken of as a great part of true wiſdom; as Deut. xxxii. 29. "O that they were wiſe, that they un- "derſtood this, that they would conſider their latter end!" And, Pſal. xc. 12. "Teach us ſo to number our days, that "we may apply our hearts unto wiſdom." So the wiſdom of the wiſe virgins is repreſented as conſiſting much in this, that they improved the proper ſeaſon to buy oil.

Therefore the wiſe man in theſe books of Proverbs and Eccleſiaſtes, agreeably to his deſign, inſiſts on this part of wiſdom. He tells us the advantage of ſeeking Chriſt early; Prov. viii. 17. And adviſes us *to do what our hand findeth to do, with our might;* Eccleſ. ix. 10. He adviſes young people to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, while the evil days come not, in which they ſhall ſay they have no pleaſure; Eccleſ. xii. 1. So here in the text he adviſes us to a wiſe improvement of the preſent ſeaſon.——In the words are two things to be particularly obſerved.

1. The precept, *not to boaſt of to-morrow*; i. e. not to

* Not dated.

ſpeak or act as though it were our own. It is abſurd for men to boaſt of that which is not their own. The wiſe man would not have us behave ourſelves as though any time were our's but the preſent. He that boaſts of to-morrow, acts as though he had to-morrow in his poſſeſſion, or had ſomething whereby he might depend on it, and call it his own.

2. The reaſon given for this precept; *for thou knoweſt not what a day may bring forth.* It is a good reaſon why we ſhould not behave ourſelves as though the morrow were our own, that indeed it is not our own; we are not ſure of it; we have no hold of future time; we know not whether we ſhall ſee the morrow: Or if we do know that we ſhall ſee it, we know not what we ſhall ſee on it.

DOCTRINE. We ought to behave ourſelves every day, as though we had no dependence on any other day.

In handling this doctrine, I ſhall (1.) briefly ſay ſomething which may be needful to prevent miſunderſtanding. (2.) Show what is implied in this doctrine. (3.) Show when men behave themſelves, as if they had dependence on another day. (4.) Show why this ſhould be avoided.

I. To prevent a miſunderſtanding of the doctrine, I obſerve to you, that it is not meant, that we ſhould in every reſpect behave as though we knew or concluded that we ſhould not live another day. Not depending on another day, is a different thing from concluding, that we ſhall not live another day. We may have reaſon for the one, and not for the other. We have good reaſon not to depend on another day, but we have no reaſon to conclude, that we ſhall not live another day. We may have no reaſon to depend upon another day, and ſo that may be one extreme. On the other hand, neither may we have any reaſon to depend upon it that we ſhall not enjoy another day, and therefore that may be another extreme.

In ſome reſpects we ought to carry ourſelves, as though we knew we ſhould not live another day, and ſhould improve every day as if it were the laſt. Particularly, we ſhould live every day as conſcientiouſly and as holily as if we knew it were the laſt. We ſhould be as careful every day to avoid all ſin, as if we knew that that night our ſouls ſhould be required of us. We ſhould be as careful to do every duty

duty which God requires of us, and take as much care that we have a good account to give to our Judge, of our improvement of that day, as if we concluded that we muſt be called to give an account before another day.

But in many other reſpects, we are not obliged to behave ourſelves as though we concluded that we ſhould not live to another day. If we had reaſon to conclude that we ſhould not live another day, ſome things would not be our duty which now are our duty. As for inſtance, in ſuch a caſe it would not be the duty of any perſon to make proviſion for his temporal ſubſiſtence during another day: to neglect which, as things now are, would be very imprudent and fooliſh, as the conſequences would ſhow, if every man were to act in this manner; at this rate the whole world would preſently murder itſelf.

If ſo, it would never be man's duty to plough or ſow the field, or to lay up for winter; but theſe things are man's duty; as Prov. vi. 6. "Go to the ant, thou ſluggard, con-" ſider her ways, and be wiſe: which having no guide, o-" verſeer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the ſummer, and " gathereth her food in the harveſt." And chap. x. 5. &c. " He that gathereth in ſummer is a wiſe ſon: but he that " ſleepeth in harveſt, is a ſon that cauſeth ſhame." And many other places might be mentioned.

So, on the other hand, if we were certain that we ſhould not live another day, ſome things would be our duty to-day, which now are not ſo. As for inſtance, it would be proper for us to ſpend our time in giving our dying counſels, and in ſetting our houſes in order. If it were revealed to us, that we ſhould die before to-morrow morning, we ought to look upon it as a call of God to us, to ſpend the ſhort remainder of our lives in thoſe things which immediately concern our departure, more than otherwiſe it would be our duty to do.

But the words of the text, which forbid us to boaſt of to-morrow, cannot be extended ſo far as to ſignify, that we ought in all reſpects to live, as if we knew we ſhould not ſee another day. Yet they undoubtedly mean, that we ought not to behave ourſelves in any reſpect, as though we *depended* on another day. I now proceed,

II. To ſhow what is implied in the precept, *Boaſt not thyſelf of to-morrow*, or in behaving ourſelves every day as though we had no dependence on any other day. In this precept two things ſeem to be forbidden.

1. Boaſting ourſelves of what ſhall be on the morrow, or behaving ourſelves as though we depended on particular things to come to paſs in this world, in ſome future time. As when men behave themſelves, as though they depended on being rich, or promoted to honour hereafter; or as though they were ſure of accompliſhing any particular deſign another day. So did the rich man in the goſpel, when he did not only promiſe himſelf, that he ſhould live many years, but promiſed himſelf alſo, that he ſhould be rich many years. Hence he ſaid to his ſoul, that *he had much goods laid up for many years.*

And if men act as though they depended upon it, that they ſhould another day accompliſh ſuch and ſuch things for their ſouls, then may they be ſaid to boaſt themſelves of to-morrow, and not to behave themſelves as though they depended on no other day. As when they behave themſelves, as though they depended upon it, that they ſhould at another day have ſuch and ſuch advantages for the good of their ſouls; that they ſhould at another day have the ſtrivings of God's ſpirit; that they ſhould at another day find themſelves diſpoſed to be thorough in ſeeking their ſalvation; that they ſhould at another day have a more convenient ſeaſon; and that God at another day would ſtand ready to hear their prayers, and ſhow them mercy.

Or if they act as though they depended upon it that they ſhould have conſiderable opportunity on a death-bed to ſeek mercy; or whatever they promiſe themſelves ſhall come to paſs reſpecting them in this world, if they act as depending on it, they boaſt themſelves of to-morrow.

2. Another thing implied, is our boaſting of future time itſelf, or acting as though we depended on it, that we ſhould have our lives continued to ſee another day. Not only is the command of God delivered in the text tranſgreſſed by thoſe who behave themſelves as depending upon it, that they ſhall ſee and obtain ſuch and ſuch things to-morrow; but by thoſe who act as depending upon it, that they ſhall remain in being in this world to-morrow.

Both theſe ways of boaſting of to-morrow are reproved by the apoſtle James, ch. iv. 13. "Go to now, ye that ſay, "To-day or to-morrow we will go into ſuch a city, and "continue there a year, and buy and ſell, and get gain." By promiſing themſelves that they ſhall do ſuch and ſuch things, and that they ſhall get gain, they boaſt themſelves of what ſhall come to paſs in ſuch a time. The apoſtle in the next verſe teaches them, that they ought not to do this,

no

no nor ſo much as depend upon ſeeing another day, or on having their lives continued. verſ. 14. "Whereas ye "know not what ſhall be on the morrow: For what is "your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little "time, and then vaniſheth away." And in verſ. 15. he teaches us that both are uncertain and dependent on the will of God, viz. Whether we ſhall live another day, and if we do, whether ſuch and ſuch things ſhall come to paſs? "For that ye ought to ſay, If the Lord will, we ſhall live, "and do this or that." Therefore he adds in verſ. 16. "But now ye rejoice in your boaſtings: all ſuch rejoicing "is evil." I come now,

III. To ſhow more particularly, when men act as though they depended on another day.

1. They will do ſo, if they ſet their hearts on the enjoyments of this life. I mean not, if they have any manner of affection to them. We may have ſome affection to the enjoyments of this world; otherwiſe they would ceaſe to be enjoyments. If we might have no degree of rejoicing in them, we could not be thankful for them. Perſons may in a degree take delight in earthly friends, and other earthly enjoyments. It is agreeable to the wiſe man's advice that we ſhould do ſo: Eccleſ. v. 18. "It is good and comely for one "to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his la-"bour that he taketh under the ſun."

But by ſetting our hearts on theſe things, by placing our happineſs on them, and letting out the current of our affections after them, by turning and fixing our inclinations ſo much upon them, that we cannot well enjoy ourſelves without them, ſo that very much of the ſtrength of the faculties of our minds is employed and taken up about theſe things, we ſhow that we have our dependence on another day.

The man who doth thus, acts as though he depended on another day, yea many other days, in the world: For it is moſt evident, that if the enjoyments of this world be of ſuch a nature that they are not to be depended on for one day more, they are not worth the ſetting of our hearts upon them, or the placing of our happineſs in them. We may rejoice in the enjoyments of the world, but not in ſuch a manner as to place the reſt of our ſouls in them. As the apoſtle ſaith, we ſhould rejoice in them, as though we rejoiced not, 1 Cor. vii. 30. So that if this joy ſhould fail, our ſtock may hold good; and in this caſe we muſt behave

ourſelves

ourſelves only as if we had loſt a ſmall ſtream of joy, but ſtill had the fountain in full poſſeſſion. We ſhould conduct ourſelves as thoſe who have not the foundation of their joy ſhaken, though ſome appurtenances have failed. Our happineſs as to *the body* of it, if I may ſo ſpeak, ſhould yet ſtand as on an immovable foundation.

They who exceedingly rejoice, and are very much pleaſed and elated with the enjoyments of the world, certainly behave themſelves as though they had much dependence on their continuance for more than one or two days more.

They that addict themſelves to vain mirth, and lead a jovial life, ſhow that they ſet their hearts on the enjoyments of the world, and act as thoſe who depend on more days than the preſent. For if they were ſenſible that they could not depend on any future time, but that death would put an eternal end to all their carnal mirth before to-morrow, they would have no heart to ſpend the preſent day in ſuch a manner as they now do. It would immediately produce in them a ſober ſolid diſpoſition, far from levity and vanity.

And when perſons are very much ſunk with the loſs of any temporal enjoyments, or with any temporal diſappointments, it ſhows that they ſet their hearts upon them, and behave as though they boaſted of to-morrow, and depended on their longer continuance in life. If they had no ſuch dependence, they would not be fruſtrated in their dependence; or they would not be overwhelmed by their fruſtration. If they be very much ſunk, and the comfort of their lives be deſtroyed by it, it ſhows that thoſe temporal enjoyments were too much the foundation on which their comfort ſtood. That which makes a building totter, and threatens its deſtruction, is not the taking away of ſome of the exterior parts of the ſuperſtructure, but the removal of ſome conſiderable part of the foundation on which the houſe ſtands.

2. If men are proud of their worldly circumſtances, it ſhows that they have a dependence on to-morrow; for no man would think it worth his while to vaunt himſelf in that which is to be depended on only for a day. Though a man have a great eſtate to-day, he will not be puffed up with it, unleſs he depend upon having it to-morrow. A man who hath no dependence on any other but that he may to-morrow be in the grave, where the ſmall and great are upon a level, Job iii. 19. will not be much lifted up with his advancement to a poſt of honour.

That

That perſon will not be proud of his rich and fine cloaths, who is ſenſible that he cannot depend upon it, that he ſhall not be ſtripped by death to-morrow, and ſent naked out of the world, as he came naked into it. He will not to-day be very proud of his perſonal beauty, who hath no dependence on eſcaping to-morrow that ſtroke of death which will mar all his beauty, and make that face which he now thinks ſo comely, appear ghaſtly and horrid; when, inſtead of a ruddy and florid countenance, there will be blood ſettled, cold and congealed, fleſh ſtiff and clayey, teeth ſet, eyes fixed and ſunk into the head. Nor will he to-day very much affect to beautify and adorn with gaudy and flaunting apparel, that body concerning which he is ſenſible that he can have no dependence that it will not be wrapped in a winding-ſheet to-morrow, to be carried to the grave, there to rot, and to be covered and filled with worms.

3. So, when men envy others their worldly enjoyments, their wealth, or their worldly eaſe, or their titles and high places, or envy them their ſenſual pleaſures, or any of their worldly circumſtances, it ſhows that they ſet their hearts on the things of the world; and that they are not ſenſible that theſe things are not to be depended upon for another day. If they were, they would not think them worth their envy. They would appear ſo worthleſs in their eyes, that they would not care who had them, nor who went without them.

So when they contend about worldly poſſeſſions and enjoyments, (as almoſt all the contentions that are in the world are about theſe things), it ſhows that they have dependence on to-morrow; otherwiſe they would not think the enjoyments of the world worth the contending about. They would be very much of the temper recommended by Jeſus Chriſt, Matth. v. 40. "He that will ſue thee at the law, "and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke alſo."

4. Men behave themſelves as if they depended on another day, when they reſt and are eaſy to-day, in a condition out of which they muſt be delivered before they die. When a man's mind is at eaſe and reſt, there is ſomething that he reſts in; that reſt muſt have ſome foundation, either real or imaginary. But if the man be in a condition from which he is ſenſible he muſt ſome time or other be delivered, or be undone, it is impoſſible that he ſhould reſt in the thoughts of remaining in his condition always, and never being delivered from it; for no man is willing to be ruined;

ruined; no man can reſt in that which he conceives to be connected with his own miſery and undoing.

Therefore, if he reſt in ſuch a condition for the preſent, it muſt be on a ſuppoſition, that he ſhall be delivered from it. If he reſt in it to-day, it muſt be becauſe he depends on being delivered another day, and therefore depends on ſeeing another day.

We in this land generally profeſs, that as we are by nature, we are expoſed to eternal death, and that therefore there is a neceſſity that we get out of a natural condition ſome time before we die. And thoſe among us who are ſenſible that they have never paſſed through any ſuch change as in ſcripture is called a being born again, though they be not ſufficiently convinced that there is any ſuch place as hell, yet have a kind of belief of it; at leaſt they do not conclude, that there is no ſuch place, and therefore cannot but be ſenſible that it would be dreadful to die unconverted. Therefore, if they be in a conſiderable degree of eaſe and quietneſs in the condition they are in, it muſt be becauſe they have a dependence on being delivered out of ſuch a condition ſome time before they die.

In as much as they are eaſy in remaining in ſuch a condition to-day, without any proſpect of preſent deliverance, it ſhows plainly that they depend on another day. If they did not, they could have no manner of eaſe or quietneſs in their ſpirits in remaining in a natural condition to the end of the preſent day; becauſe, if there be no grounds of dependence on any further opportunity than what they have to-day, then what they are expoſed to, by miſſing the opportunity which they have to-day, is infinitely dreadful.

Perſons who are ſecure in their ſins, under the light of the goſpel, unleſs they be deceived with a falſe hope, are generally ſo becauſe they boaſt themſelves of to-morrow. They depend on future opportunity; they flatter themſelves with hopes of living long in the world; they depend on what ſhall come to paſs hereafter; they depend on the fulfilment of their good intentions as to what they will do at a more convenient ſeaſon.

5. Men behave themſelves as thoſe who depend on another day, when they neglect any thing to-day which muſt be done before they die. If there be any thing, let it be what it will, which is abſolutely neceſſary to be done ſome time before death, and the neceſſity of it be ſufficiently declared and ſhown to the perſon for whom it is thus neceſſary, if he neglect ſetting about it immediately, ſincerely, and with all

all his might, certainly it carries this face with it, that the man depends upon its being done hereafter, and conſequently that he ſhall have opportunity to do it.

Becauſe, as to thoſe things which are abſolutely neceſſary to be done, there is need, not only of a poſſibility of a future opportunity, but of ſomething which is to be depended on, ſome good ground to conclude that we ſhall have future opportunity; therefore, whoever lives under the goſpel, that doth not now this day thoroughly reform his life, by caſting away every abomination, and denying every luſt, and doth not this day alſo apply himſelf to the practice of the whole of his duty towards God and towards man, and doth not now begin to make religion his main buſineſs, he acts as one who depends on another day; becauſe he is abundantly taught that theſe things muſt be done before he dies.

So thoſe who have been ſeeking ſalvation for a great while, in a dull, inſincere, and ſlighty manner, and find no good effect of it, have abundant reaſon to conclude, that ſome time before they die, they muſt alter their hand, and muſt not only ſeek, but ſtrive, to enter in at the ſtrait gate, and muſt be violent for the kingdom of heaven; and therefore, if they do not begin thus to change their hand to-day, they act as thoſe who depend on another day.

So thoſe who have hitherto lived in the neglect of ſome particular known duty, whether it be the duty of ſecret prayer, or the duty of paying ſome old debt, which they have long owed to their neighbour, or the duty of confeſſing ſome fault to a brother who hath ought againſt them, or the duty of making reſtitution for ſome injury which they have done their neighbour, they act as thoſe who depend on another day.

6. Men behave themſelves as though they depended on another day, if they do that to-day which ſome time or other muſt be undone. There are many things done by men which muſt be undone by them. They muſt go back again from the way which they have gone, or they are ruined to all eternity. Therefore, in doing theſe things, they act as thoſe who depend on future opportunity to undo them: As when a man cheats or defrauds his neighbour in any thing, he acts as one that boaſts of to-morrow; for he muſt undo what he doth before he dies; he muſt ſome time or other make reſtitution, or divine juſtice, which overſees all things, and governs the whole world, and will

ſee to it that right be done, will not let go its hold of him.

So when men hearken to temptation, and yield to the ſolicitations of their luſts to commit any ſin, they act as thoſe who depend on another day. They do what muſt be undone. What they then do muſt be undone by hearty and thorough repentance, or they are ruined and loſt for ever. The morſel they ſwallowed down, they muſt vomit up again. So if perſons have been ſeeking ſalvation for a time, and then afterwards are guilty of backſliding, and turn back after their hands have been put to the plough, they act as thoſe who depend on another day. For what they now do, they muſt undo ſome time or other; they muſt go back again from their backſliding, and have all their work to do over again. And theſe things muſt be undone in this world, while men live; for there will be no undoing of them afterwards; they may be ſuffered for, but never can be undone.——I come now,

IV. To ſhow why we ought not thus to boaſt ourſelves of to-morrow; but, on the contrary, to behave ourſelves every day as though we had no dependence on another day. And there is this plain and ſufficient REASON for it, viz. That we have no grounds of dependence on another day. We have neither any foundation to depend upon ſeeing any particular things come to paſs another day, which we may hope or wiſh for, nor upon enjoying another day here in this world. We have nothing for a foundation of dependence that we ſhall not be in eternity before another day, as both reaſon and experience ſhow.

We have no promiſe of God that we ſhall ever ſee another day. We are in God's hands; our lives are in his hands; he hath ſet our bounds; the number of our months and days are with him; nor hath he told them to us. We ſee that the life of man at longeſt is very ſhort, and that nothing is more uncertain; and it is a thing univerſal among mankind, that they know not the day of their death. We ſee that great natural abilities, and ſharpneſs of wit, and clearneſs of diſcernment, do not help to any diſcovery in this matter. But wiſe and diſcerning men are as uncertain of the term of their lives as others.

There are ſo many ways and means whereby the lives of men come to an end, that no circumſtances in which a man can be are any ſecurity to him from death. That it is but

but a very little while till to-morrow, is no good ground of dependence that we ſhall live till then. We ſee that deaths as ſudden as our dying before to-morrow morning, are common in the world. We very often ſee or hear of ſudden deaths. How many ſuddenly, in a few minutes, paſs from a ſtate of health to a ſtate of death, in the day-time, by ſeveral kinds of diſeaſe, which give no warning of their approach, and by many unforeſeen accidents! How many go to bed, and to ſleep, in health, and are found dead in their beds in the morning! So that our preſent health is no good ground of dependence that we ſhall live to ſee another day.

That perſons are now in youth, is no good ground of dependence upon another day; for ſudden unexpected deaths are common even among thoſe who are in the bloom of youth. Nor is it any ground of dependence in this caſe, that a man is of a more than ordinary healthy and ſtrong conſtitution. It is found by experience, that ſuch are liable to ſudden death as well as others: Job xxi. 23. "One dieth in his full ſtrength. His breaſts are full "of milk, and his bones are moiſtened with marrow."

That perſons have already lived to ſee a great many days, and that after they had been often in times paſt told, that they were uncertain of any future time; or that perſons have a ſtrong deſire to live longer; or that they are now very unprepared for death, both on temporal and ſpiritual accounts; is no ground of dependence on another day. Death tarries for no man, but comes when and to whom he is ſent, and ſtrikes the deadly blow, whether the man be prepared or not.

Again, that men have been very uſeful in their day, and that it is of great importance to their families and neighbours that they ſhould live longer, is no ground of dependence. The moſt uſeful men are often cut down by death, in the midſt of their uſefulneſs. The ſame may be ſaid, though we cannot ſee which way death ſhould come at us before to-morrow. To how many accidents, to how many diſeaſes are we liable, which may prove fatal before to-morrow, which yet it is impoſſible for us to foreſee! So, if we be very careful of our lives, and our health, not to expoſe ourſelves to any dangers, ſtill this is no ground of dependence as to any future time. Death comes in many ways which were not thought of. Men foreſee not the means of their death, any more than the fiſh ſecurely ſwim-

ming in the water foreſees the net, or the bird that ſecurely feeds upon the bait ſees the ſnare. It is as the wiſe man obſerves, in Eccleſ. ix. 12. "For man alſo knoweth not his "time; as the fiſhes that are taken in an evil net, and as "the birds that are caught in the ſnare; ſo are the ſons of "men ſnared in an evil time, when it falleth ſuddenly upon "them."

SER.

SERMON XXVII.

The Sin and Folly of depending on future Time.

PROV. xxvii. 1.

Boaſt not thyſelf of to-morrow; for thou knoweſt not what a day may bring forth.

DOCTRINE. WE ought to behave ourſelves every day as though we had no dependence on any other day.

In my former diſcourſe grounded upon theſe words, I ſaid what I propoſed to ſay immediately upon this doctrine; and ſhall now proceed to the

IMPROVEMENT.

I. I ſhall improve this doctrine, by putting you all upon examining yourſelves, whether you do not boaſt yourſelves of to-morrow, or whether you do not live in ſuch a manner as you would not, were it not that you depend on future time and future opportunity in the world. Would not your behaviour be very different from what it now is, if you every day lived and acted without any dependence on ſeeing one day more?

You cannot but acknowledge, every one of you, that it is moſt reaſonable that you ſhould live and act thus. If you ſhould be particularly inquired of, you would doubtleſs own, and you cannot but own, that you have no good ground of dependence on another day; and therefore that you cannot act wiſely any otherwiſe than in acting as one who hath no dependence on any ſuch thing. Therefore inquire whether you act wiſely and reaſonably in this reſpect.

1. Do

1. Do you not ſet your hearts much more on this world, than you would, if you had no dependence on the morrow? Is not the language of the rich man in the goſpel, the ſecret language of your hearts? "Soul, thou haſt "much goods laid up for many years," &c. Is not this the language of your hearts, with reſpect to what you have gotten already; which makes you place your happineſs ſo much in it? And with reſpect to what of the world you are ſeeking and purſuing, is it not with a dependence on enjoying it for a great while, when you ſhall have obtained it? Are not your lands and other poſſeſſions which you have gotten, or are about to get, in your own imagination, your's for a great while.

Would your mind be ſo filled up with thoughts and cares about theſe things, ſo much to the crouding out of things of another world? Would you lay yourſelves under ſo great diſadvantages for your ſouls good, by involving yourſelves in worldly cares; if you had no dependence on having any thing to do with theſe things for more than the preſent day? If you did not depend on conſiderable more time in the world, would your inquiry be ſo much, What ſhall we eat, and what ſhall we drink, and wherewithal ſhall we be clothed? and ſo little, How ſhall we make our calling and election ſure; how ſhall we be aſſured that we are upon a good foundation for another world, and that we are in ſuch a ſtate, that death cannot hurt us? How ſhall we be ſure that we are ready to appear before the judgement-ſeat of an heart-ſearching God?

Would there be altogether ſo much of your time ſpent in laying up treaſure on earth, and ſo little in laying up treaſure in heaven, that you might have ſtore againſt the day of death, were it not that you put death at a diſtance? Would you be ſo much raiſed at your temporal proſperity, and ſo much ſunk when you meet with croſſes and diſappointments in your worldly affairs, if you did not think that continuance in the world is to be depended on for more days than the preſent?

Let thoſe who very much affect to adorn their bodies in gaudy apparrel, inquire whether they would think it worth their while to ſpend ſo much time to make themſelves fine, and to ſet themſelves forth as gayer than others, if they really had no dependence that their bodies would be preſerved one day longer from being claſped in the cold arms of death?

2. Inquire

2. Inquire whether you would not much leſs meddle with the concerns of others, and be much more employed with your own hearts, if each day you had no dependence on living another day. If you were ſenſible that you had no other day to depend upon than this day, you would be ſenſible that you had great affairs of your own to attend to. You would find a great deal of buſineſs to do at home concerning affairs between God and your own ſoul; and conſidering that you cannot depend on another day, it would ſeem to you that you have but a ſhort time in which to do it, and that therefore you have need to be much engaged in it. You would ſay as Chriſt did, I muſt work while the day laſts, for the night cometh, wherein no man can work. You would find ſo much to be done, and ſo much difficulty in doing it, that you would have little leiſure, and little heart to intermeddle with the buſineſs of others. Your buſineſs would be confined to a much narrower compaſs, to a leſs circle than now it is. You would have ſo much to do at home in your cloſets, and with your own hearts, that you would find no occaſion to go abroad for buſineſs to fill up your time.

But the truth is, men conceive of a great deal of time which they have to be filled up, and hence they want buſineſs to fill it up: they depend on to-morrow, and the day following, and next month, and next year, yea many years to come. When they are young they depend on living to be middle-aged, and when middle-aged they depend on old age, and always put far away the day of death. Let them be young or old, there always ſeems to them to be a great vacancy between them and death; hence they wander to and fro for buſineſs to fill up that vacancy.

Whereas if they were ſenſible of the uncertainty of life, they would, in the firſt place, make ſure of their own buſineſs; the buſineſs of their own precious, immortal ſouls would be done, before they would attend much to the buſineſs of other people. They would have no deſire or diſpoſition to concern themſelves with every private quarrel which breaks out in the neighbourhood. They would not think it much concerned them to inquire into the matter, and to paſs their cenſure on the affair. They would find ſomething elſe to do, than to ſet by the hour together, diſcuſſing and cenſuring the conduct of ſuch and ſuch perſons, gathering up or rehearſing the ſtories which are carried about to the diſadvantage of this and that perſon.

We

We ſeldom, if ever, ſee men who are upon ſick-beds, and look upon themſelves very dangerouſly ſick, diſpoſed to ſpend their time in this manner; and the reaſon is, that they look upon it doubtful whether they ſhall live very long: they do not ſo much as others, depend on much time to ſpare; hence their minds are taken up more about their own ſouls concerns, than about the concerns of others. So it would be with perſons in health, if their health did not make them depend on a great deal of time in the world.

3. If you each day depended on no other day but the preſent, would you not engage and intereſt yourſelves much leſs in party deſigns and ſchemes, than you are now wont to do? Among a people divided into two parties, as this town hath been for a long time, there is commonly much done by the partizans in forming ſchemes of oppoſition to one another. There is always a ſtrife, who ſhall get their wills and carry their point. This often engages them in open quarrels, and alſo in ſecret intrigues. That there is ſo much done in theſe things, is a certain evidence that they boaſt themſelves of to-morrow, and put death at a diſtance.

Men would certainly find themſelves very much indiſpoſed to ſuch things, if they were ſo ſenſible of the uncertainty of life, as to depend on no other day than the preſent. It is therefore very proper, that you ſhould every one examine yourſelves in this particular, at this time. If it were really ſo with you, that you depended on no other day than the preſent, would your hearts be ſo much engaged in the ſtrife between the two parties, as they often are? Would your ſpirits be ſo often raiſed and ruffled? Would you go about with ſo much of a grudge and prejudice againſt ſuch and ſuch men; harbouring ſo much of old leaven, which ſo often breaks out in heats of ſpirit; and as an old ſore which was ſkinned over, but not cured, ſets to raging, breaks open and runs, with a touch which would not have hurt ſound fleſh?

Commonly in the management of a ſtrife between two parties there is a great deal of envy. When any who belong to one of the parties ſeem to proſper, the other party will envy them; it is a grievous thing to them. So there is alſo much contempt; when one of the parties gets the aſcendant a little over the other, they are ready to make the utmoſt improvement of it, and to inſult the other party.

There

There is commonly in ſuch caſes a great deal of mutual ſecret reproach. When thoſe of one party get together then is the time to inveigh againſt thoſe of the other party, and to ſet forth their injuſtice and their fraudulent practices. Then is the time for them to paſs their cenſure on their words and actions. Then is the time to expoſe their own ſurmiſes and ſuſpicions of what the other party intends, what it aims at in ſuch and ſuch things, what the purpoſes of individuals are, and what they ſuppoſe their ſecret actions are.

Then is the time for all that are friends in the cauſe, and engaged in the ſame deſigns, to entertain one another by ridiculing the words and actions of the other party, and to make themſelves ſport of their folly and their diſappointments; and much is done at calling one another *Raca* and *fools*, or other names equivalent, if not much more than equivalent. Then is the time to lay their heads together, to plot and contrive how they ſhall manage ſuch an affair ſo as to diſappoint the other party, and obtain their own wills.

Brethren, theſe things ought not ſo to be among a Chriſtian people; eſpecially among a people that has made the profeſſion which we have made. Nor would they be ſo if it were not for your dependence on much future time in the world. If you were ſo ſenſible of your continual liableneſs to death, that every day was the laſt you depended upon, theſe things certainly would not be ſo. For let us but conſider what are the effects of death with reſpect to ſuch things. It puts an end to party-quarrels. Many men hold theſe quarrels as long as they live. They begin young, and hold on through many great and ſore afflictions and chaſtiſements of Providence. The old ſore remains, when the ſupporters of nature bow, and the eyes grow dim, and the hands tremble with age. But death, when that comes, puts an end to all their quarrelling in this world. Death ſilences the moſt clamorous, and cenſorious, and backbiting tongue. When men are dead, they ceaſe to lay ſchemes againſt thoſe of another party: death daſhes all their ſchemes, ſo far as they have any concern in them. Pſal. cxlvi. 4. "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his "earth; in that very day his thoughts periſh."

When men are dead, they ceaſe to bite and devour others; as it is ſaid to have been of old a proverb among the Egyptians, *Dead men don't bite.* There are many who

will bite and devour as long as they live, but death tames them. Men could not be quiet or ſafe by them while alive, but none will be afraid of them when they ſhall be dead. The bodies of thoſe that made ſuch a noiſe and tumult when alive, when dead, lie as quietly among the graves of their neighbours as any others. Their enemies, of whom they ſtrove to get their wills while alive, get their wills of them when they are dead. Nothing can pleaſe their enemies better than to have them out of their way. It ſuits them, that thoſe who were ſo troubleſome to them, are locked up ſafe in the cloſe grave, where they will no more ſtand in their way.

After men are dead, there are no more effects of their pride, their craftineſs, their hatred and envy. Eccl. ix. 6. "Alſo their love, and their hatred, and their envy "is now periſhed."

The time will ſoon come, when as many of you who are now preſent, as have for many years been at times warmly contending one with another, will be very peaceable as to any quarrelling in this world. Your dead bodies will probably lie quietly together in the ſame burying-place. If you do not leave off contending before death, how natural will it be for others to have ſuch thoughts as theſe in their minds, when they ſhall come to ſee your dead corpſes; What! is this the man who uſed to be ſo buſy in carrying on the deſigns of his party? Oh, now he has done; now he hath no more any part in any of theſe things; now it doth not at all concern him, who get their wills, or what party is uppermoſt. We ſhall hear his voice no more in our *town meetings*. He will not ſit any more to reproach and laugh at others. He is gone to appear before his Judge, and to receive according to his conduct in life.

The conſideration of ſuch things as theſe would certainly have a mighty effect among us. If we did not put far away the day of death, if all acted every day as not depending on any other day, we ſhould be a peaceable, quiet people.

4. Inquire whether or no you do not allow yourſelves in ſome things, and endeavour to flatter yourſelves that there is no evil in them, which you would by no means care to do if you had not a dependence on living till tomorrow. It is very common among men, when they are ſtrongly enticed to ſome ſinful practice, by their worldly intereſt, or by their carnal appetites, to pretend that they do

do not think there is any evil in it; when indeed they know better. The pretence they make uſe of for the preſent, to ſtill the cry of their conſciences, is no more than a pretence to ſerve a preſent turn And if they expected to have their ſouls required of them that night, they would by no means dare to perſiſt in the practice.

Therefore examine the liberties you take by this teſt, What would you think of them, if you now ſhould have the following news ſent you by ſome meſſenger from heaven; John or Thomas, (or whatever your name be), this night thy ſoul ſhall be required of thee. How would ſuch tidings ſtrike you! How would they alter the face of things! Doubtleſs your thoughts would be very quick; you would ſoon begin to reflect on yourſelves, and to examine your paſt and preſent conduct. And in what colours would theſe and thoſe liberties which you now take appear to you in the caſe now ſuppoſed? Would you then be as full in it as you are now, that there is no evil in them? Would you not be at all the leſs bold to go forward and meet death, for having continued in ſuch practices? Would you dare to commit ſuch acts again before you ſhould die, which now you ſay are lawful? Would not the few hours which you would have to live, be at all the more uncomfortable to you, for having done ſuch things? Would you not preſently wiſh that you had let them alone? Yea, would they not appear frightful and terrifying like ghoſts to you? If it be thus, it is a ſign that the reaſon why you now allow yourſelves in them, and plead for the lawfulneſs of them, is, that you put death at a diſtance, and depend on many other days in the world.

5. Inquire whether you do not ſome things on the preſumption, that you ſhall hereafter repent of them. Is not this the very thing which cauſes you to dare to do ſuch things as you do? Is it not the very ground on which you venture ſo and ſo to gratify your luſts? Let young people examine all their ſecret carriage; what they do alone in the dark and in ſecret corners. God knoweth and your own hearts know, though men do not know. Put the queſtion impartially to your own conſciences; is not this the very thing that gives you the courage to do as you do, that you hear that God is a very merciful God, and that he often of his ſovereign mercy gives repentance of great ſins, and even wilful ſins, and in conſequence of repentance forgives? And ſo you hope that one day or other he will do

ſo to you. You intend ſometime hereafter earneſtly to ſeek it; and you hope you ſhall be awakened. And if you be very earneſt, as you intend to be, you hope you ſhall be converted, and then you ſhall be forgiven, and it will be as well as if you had never committed ſuch ſins.

If this be the caſe, conſider how you boaſt of to-morrow, and fooliſhly depend on future opportunity to repent, as well as fooliſhly preſume on the mercy of God to give you repentance, at the ſame time that you take a courſe to provoke God, for ever to give you up to a ſealed hardneſs and blindneſs, and to a moſt fearful damnation; not conſidering that God will glorify his revenging juſtice as well as his mercy; nor remembering the ſad example of Eſau, "who for a morſel of meat ſold his birth-right; and afterwards, when he would have inherited the bleſſing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he ſought it carefully with tears." Heb. xii. 16. 17.

6. Inquire whether you improve this day, as one who doth not depend upon ever having opportunity to keep another Sabbath, or hear another ſermon. It appears from what hath been already ſaid, that you have no grounds to depend on any more ſuch opportunities. Now the day is preſent, and ſo you are in the better capacity to determine how it is with you. It is but for you to reflect upon yourſelves, to look inward, and ſee how it is with you now at this preſent time. And how is it? Are you as ſtrict and as diligent in keeping this Sabbath, watching your thoughts, keeping your hearts, ſtriving in duties both public and private, and improving ordinances, as might be expected of one who hath no dependence on ever enjoying ſuch an opportunity any more; one who doth not depend on ever ſetting foot again within the walls of God's houſe?

Do you hear this ſermon with that attention, and care, and deſire, and endeavour to improve it for your good, as you would, if you did not depend on ever hearing another ſermon; or did not depend upon it that your bodies would not be in the grave, and your ſouls fixed in eternity, in their unalterable ſtate, before the next Sabbath?

7. Are you careful to ſee to it that the grounds of your hope are good? A man who hath an hope of being in a ſtate of acceptance with God, but is not ſure, if he had no dependence on any other day's opportunity of making it ſure than to-day; if he did not at all depend upon it, but that his hope muſt be tried before to-morrow, by the all-ſeeing,

ſeeing, heart-ſearching God; would be very ſtrict in examining himſelf and ſearching the grounds of his hope, and would not reſt in an uncertainty. He would be very thorough in informing himſelf what might be depended on as good evidence of an intereſt in Chriſt, and what not; and would be exceedingly ſtrict in ſearching his own heart, to ſee whether there were any thing in him that comes up to the requiſites laid down in the ſcriptures.

If what appears hopeful in him were dim and obſcure, he would ſet himſelf very earneſtly to obtain that which would be more clear and manifeſt, and would cry earneſtly to God for it, and would apply himſelf to a diligent uſe of means in order to it. And good reaſon why; for he depends on no other opportunity to make his calling and election ſure, than what he hath to-day. Inquire therefore whether you be thus thorough in examining your hope. And are you thus careful effectually to ſee to it, that you are on a ſure foundation? If not, then you behave yourſelves as thoſe that depend on to-morrow.

II. This doctrine may be improved in an uſe of *exhortation* to all, to ſpend every day as not depending on any other day. It is certainly moſt reaſonable that we ſhould ſo do. God hath concealed from us the day of our death, without doubt, partly for this end, that we might be excited to be always ready, and might live as thoſe that are always waiting for the coming of their Lord, agreeably to the counſel which Chriſt gives us, Matt. xxiv. 42. 43. 44. And, chap. xxv. 13. And, Mark xiii. 32. &c.

That watchman is not faithful, who being ſet to defend an houſe from thieves, or a city from an enemy who is at hand, will at any hour venture to ſleep, truſting that the thief or the enemy will not come. Therefore it is expected of the watchman, that he behave himſelf every hour of the night, as one who doth not depend upon it that the enemy will tarry until the next hour. Now therefore let me, in Chriſt's name, renew the call and counſel of Jeſus Chriſt to you, to watch as thoſe that know not what hour your Lord will come. Let me call upon thoſe poor wretches, who are hitherto in a natural condition, having never been born again. Depend not upon it, that you will not be in hell before to-morrow morning. You have no reaſon for any ſuch dependence; God hath not promiſed to keep you from it, or to with-hold his wrath ſo long.

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How can you reaſonably be eaſy or quiet for one day, or one night, in ſuch a condition, when you know not but that your Lord will come this night, and what hour of the night you know not? And if you ſhould then be found as you now are, unregenerate, how unprepared would you be for his coming, and how fearful would be the conſequence! Be exhorted therefore, for your own ſakes, immediately to awake out of ſleep, and ſleep no more, but watch henceforward, and improve the remainder of this day, and each of your days henceforward, if you ſhall live to ſee any more days, as not depending on any other day.

Let me exhort every one, of whatever character, to have no dependence on any future time; to keep every Sabbath as having no dependence on the opportunity to enjoy another Sabbath; to hear every ſermon, as if it were the laſt that you ſhall ever hear. And when you go into your cloſets, and addreſs yourſelves to your Father who ſeeth in ſecret, do it in no dependence on any future opportunity to perform the ſame duty. When any of you that are young go into company for your amuſement and diverſion, conſider that that may be the laſt opportunity of the like nature that ever you may have. In all your dealings with your neighbours, act as if you were never to make another bargain. Behave in your families every day, as though you depended on no other, than to take your final leave of them before another day.——Here I ſhall offer you two motives.

1. Conſider, if you will hearken to this counſel, how much it will tend to your ſafety and peace in life and death. It is the way really and truly to be ready for death; yea to be fit to live or fit to die; to be ready for affliction and adverſity, and for whatever God in his providence ſhall bring upon you. It is the way to be in, not only an habitual, but actual preparedneſs for all changes, and particularly for your laſt change.

It is the way to poſſeſs your ſouls in a ſerene and undiſturbed peace, and to enable you to go on with an immoveable fortitude of ſoul, to meet the moſt frightful changes, to encounter the moſt formidable enemies, and to be ready with unſhaken confidence to triumph over death whenever you meet him; to have your hearts fixed truſting in God, as one that ſtands on a firm foundation, and hath for his habitation the munition of rocks, that is not

not afraid of evil-tidings, but laughs at the fear of the enemy. It will be the way for you to poſſeſs that quietneſs and aſſurance ſpoken of, Iſa. xxxii. 17. "The work of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace, and the effect of righteouſneſs, quietneſs and aſſurance for ever."

The ſervant who always ſtands watching, will not be at all ſurpriſed at the news that his Lord is coming. This will be the way for you to live above the fear of death. Yea, if heaven and earth ſhould ſhake, you may ſtand firm and unſhaken, being ſettled on a rock, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. O how happy are ſuch perſons, who have ſuch ſafety and peace! What a bleſſed peace is that which ariſes from ſuch a conſtant preparation for death! How happy therefore is that ſervant whom his Lord, when he cometh, ſhall find ſo doing!

2. What diſmal calamities and miſeries mankind are ſubject to for want of this, for want of behaving themſelves every day as not depending on any future day! The way of the world is, one day fooliſhly to depend on another, yea on many others. And what is the conſequence? Why, the conſequence with reſpect to the bigger part of the world is, that they live all their days without any true peace or reſt of ſoul. They are all their lifetime ſubject to bondage through fear of death. And when death ſenſibly approaches they are put into a terrible fright. They have a diſmal view of their paſt lives; the ill improvement of their time, and the ſins they have been guilty of, ſtand ſtaring them in the face, and are more frightful to them than ſo many devils. And when they look forward into that eternity whither they are going, how diſmal is the proſpect! O how do their hearts ſhrink at the thought of it! They go before the judgement-ſeat of God, as thoſe that are dragged thither, while they would gladly, if they could, hide themſelves in the caves and dens of the earth.

And what is worſe yet than all the diſquietude and terror of conſcience in this world; the conſequence of a contrary behaviour, with reſpect to the bulk of mankind, is their eternal perdition. They flatter themſelves, that they ſhall ſee another day, and then another, and truſt to that, until finally moſt of them are ſwallowed up in hell, to lament their folly to all eternity, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimſtone.

Conſider how it was with all the fooliſh virgins who truſted to the delay of the bridegroom's coming; when he came

came they were ſurpriſed, and found unprepared, having no oil in their lamps at that time; and while they went to buy, thoſe who were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was ſhut againſt them, and they came afterwards crying in vain, *Lord, Lord, open to us.*

SER-

SERMON XXVIII.*

The Sin of Theft and of Injuſtice.

EXOD. xx. 15.

Thou ſhalt not ſteal.

THIS you all know is one of the ten commandments, which conſtitute a ſummary of man's duty, as revealed by God. God made many revelations to the children of Iſrael in the wilderneſs by Moſes: but this made in the ten commandments is the chief. Moſt of thoſe other revelations, which God made to that people, contained ceremonial or judicial laws; but this contains the moral law. The moſt of thoſe other laws reſpected the Jewiſh nation; but here is a ſummary of the laws that are binding on all mankind. Thoſe were to laſt till Chriſt ſhould come, and have ſet up the Chriſtian church; theſe are of perpetual obligation, and laſt to the end of the world. God every where, by Moſes and the prophets, manifeſts a far greater regard to the duties of theſe commands, than to any of the rites of the ceremonial law.

Theſe commands were the firſt commands that were given forth at Mount Sinai, before any of the precepts of the ceremonial or judicial laws. They were delivered by a great voice out of the midſt of fire, which made all the people in the camp tremble, and afterwards were engraven on the tables of ſtone, and laid up in the ark: the firſt table containing the four firſt commandments, which teach our duty to God; the ſecond table containing the ſix laſt, which teach our duty to man. The ſum of the duties of the firſt table is contained in that which Chriſt ſays is the firſt and great commandment of the law; Matth. xxii. 37.

* Dated July 1740.

" Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, " and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind." The ſum of what is required in the ſecond table, is what Chriſt calls the ſecond command, like unto the firſt; verſ. 39. " The " ſecond is like unto it, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as " thyſelf."

Of the commands of this ſecond table of the law, the firſt, which is the fifth of the ten, refers to that reſpect and honour which is due to our neighbour; the ſecond reſpects his life; the third his chaſtity; the fourth his eſtate; the fifth his good name; the ſixth and laſt reſpects his poſſeſſions and enjoyments in general. It is that command which reſpects our neighbour's eſtate, and which is the fourth command of the ſecond table, and the eighth of the whole decalogue, on which I am to inſiſt at this time.

Here I ſhall not raiſe any doctrine from the words, as the ſubject of my diſcourſe, but ſhall make the command itſelf, as the words of it lie before us in the decalogue, my ſubject. And that I may treat of this command in a manner as brief as may be, I ſhall not ſtand to ſhow, firſt, what duties are required by the command, and then what ſins are forbidden in it: but as the words of the commandment are in the form of a prohibition, forbidding a certain kind of ſin; ſo I ſhall handle them, by conſidering particularly what it is that this command forbids. The ſin that is forbidden in this command is called ſtealing; yet we cannot reaſonably underſtand it only of that act, which in the more ordinary and ſtrict ſenſe of the word, is called ſtealing. But the iniquity which this command forbids, may be ſummarily expreſſed thus:

An unjuſt uſurping of our neighbour's property, without his conſent.

So much is doubtleſs comprehended in the text; yet this comprehends much more than is implied in the ordinary uſe of the word, *ſtealing;* which is only a ſecret taking of that which is another's, from his poſſeſſion, without either his conſent or knowledge. But the ten commands are not to be limited to the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the words, but are to be underſtood in ſuch a latitude, as to include all things that are of that nature or kind. Hence Chriſt reproves the Phariſee's interpretation of the ſixth command, Matth. v. 21, 22; and alſo their interpretation of the ſeventh command; ſee verſ. 27. 28; by which it appears that the commands are not to be underſtood as forbidding only

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theſe individual ſins, which are expreſsly mentioned, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the expreſſions; but all other things of the ſame nature or kind.

Therefore undoubtedly what is forbidden in this command is not only that private robbing of our neighbour, which is called ſtealing in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the expreſſion; but all unjuſt uſurpation of our neighbour's property. Here it may be obſerved, that an unjuſt uſurpation of our neighbour's property is twofold; it may be, (1.) Either by with-holding what is our neighbour's, or, (2.) By taking it from him.

FIRST, It conſiſts in an unjuſt with-holding of what is our neighbour's. There are many ways in which perſons may unjuſtly uſurp their neighbour's property, by with-holding what is his due; but I ſhall particularize at this time only two things.

1. The unfaithfulneſs of men in not fulfilling their engagements. Ordinarily when men promiſe any thing to their neighbour, or enter into engagements by undertaking any buſineſs with which their neighbour entruſts them, their engagements inveſt their neighbour with a right to that which is engaged; ſo that if they with-hold it, they uſurp that which belongs to their neighbour. So it is, when men break their promiſes, becauſe they find them to be inconvenient, and they cannot fulfil them without difficulty and trouble; or merely becauſe they have altered their minds ſince they promiſed. They think they have not conſulted their own intereſt in the promiſe which they have made, and that if they had conſidered the matter as much before they promiſed as they have ſince, they ſhould not have promiſed. Therefore they take the liberty to ſet their own promiſes aſide. Beſides, ſometimes perſons violate this command, by neglecting to fulfil their engagements, through a careleſs, negligent ſpirit.

They violate this command, in with-holding what belongs to their neighbour, when they are not faithful in any buſineſs which they have undertaken to do for their neighbour. If their neighbour have hired them to labour for him for a certain time, and they be not careful well to huſband the time; if they be hired to day's labour, and be not careful to improve the day, as they have reaſon to think that he who hired them juſtly expected of them; or if they be hired to accompliſh ſuch a piece of work, and be not careful to do it well, but do it ſlightly, do it not as

if it were for themſelves, or as they would have others do for them, when they in like manner betruſt them with any buſineſs of their's; or if they be intruſted with any particular affair, which they undertake, but uſe not that care, contrivance, and diligence, to manage it ſo as will be to the advantage of him who entruſts them, and as they would manage it, or would inſiſt that it ſhould be managed, if the affair were their own; in all theſe caſes they unjuſtly with-hold what belongs to their neighbour.

2. Another way in which men unjuſtly with-hold what is their neighbour's, is *in neglecting to pay their debts.* Sometimes this happens, becauſe they run ſo far into debt that they cannot reaſonably hope to be able to pay their debts; and this they do, either through pride and affectation of living above their circumſtances; or through a graſping, covetous diſpoſition, or ſome other corrupt principle. Sometimes they neglect to pay their debts from careleſſneſs of ſpirit about it, little concerning themſelves whether they are paid or not, taking no care to go to their creditor, or to ſend to him; and if they ſee him from time to time, they ſay nothing about their debts. Sometimes they neglect to pay their debts, becauſe it would put them to ſome inconvenience. The reaſon why they do it not, is not becauſe they cannot do it, but becauſe they cannot do it ſo conveniently as they deſire; and ſo they rather chuſe to put their creditor to inconvenience by being without what properly belongs to him, than to put themſelves to inconvenience by being without what doth not belong to them, and what they have no right to detain. In any of theſe caſes they unjuſtly uſurp the property of their neighbour.

Sometimes perſons have that by them with which they could pay their debts if they would; but they want to lay out their money for ſomething elſe, to buy gay cloathing for their children, or to advance their eſtates, or for ſome ſuch end. They have other deſigns in hand, which muſt fail, if they pay their debts. When men thus with-hold what is due, they unjuſtly uſurp what is not their own. Sometimes they neglect to pay their debts, and their excuſe for it is, that their creditor doth not need it; that he hath a plentiful eſtate, and can well bear to lie out of his money. But if the creditor be ever ſo rich, that gives no right to the debtor, to with-hold from him that which belongs to him. If it be due, it ought to be paid; for that is the very notion of it's being due. It is no more lawful to with-hold

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from a man what is his due, without his conſent, becauſe he is rich and able to do without it, than it is lawful to ſteal from a man becauſe he is rich, and able to bear the loſs.

Secondly, The ſecond way wherein men uſurp their neighbour's property is, by unjuſtly taking it from him. The principal ways of doing this ſeem to be theſe four, by negligence, by fraud, by violence, or by ſtealing ſtrictly ſo called.

1. The firſt way of unjuſtly depriving our neighbour of that which is his, is by negligence, by careleſsly neglecting that which is expected by neighbours, one of another, and is neceſſary to prevent our neighbour's ſuffering in his eſtate by us, or by any thing that is our's; and neceſſary in order that neighbours may live one by another, without ſuffering in their lawful intereſts, rights, and poſſeſſions, one by another.

For inſtance, when proper care is not taken by men to prevent their neighbour's ſuffering in the produce of his fields or incloſures, from their cattle, or other brute creatures: which may be either through negligence with regard to their creatures themſelves, in keeping thoſe that are unruly, and giving them their liberty, though they know that they are not fit to have their liberty, and are commonly wont to break into their neighbour's incloſures greatly to his damage; or through a neglect of that which is juſtly expected of them, to defend others fields from ſuffering by the neighbourhood of their own. In ſuch caſes men are guilty of unjuſtly taking from their neighbour what is his property.

It is ſaid in the law of Moſes, Exod. xxii. 5. "If a man "ſhall cauſe a field or vineyard to be eaten, and ſhall put "in his beaſt, and ſhall feed in another man's field; of the "beſt of his own field, and of the beſt of his vineyard "ſhall he make reſtitution." Now a man may be unjuſtly the cauſe of his neighbour's field or vineyard being eaten, either by putting in his beaſt, and ſo doing what he ſhould not do; or by neglecting to do what he ſhould do, to prevent his beaſt from getting into his field. What is ſaid in the 144th Pſalm, and two laſt verſes, ſuppoſes that a people who carry themſelves as becomes a people whoſe God is the Lord, will take thorough care that beaſts do not break into their neighbour's incloſures: "That our "oxen may be ſtrong to labour; that there be *no breaking* "*in*,

" *in*, nor *going out*; that there be no complaining in our " ſtreets. Happy is that people that is in ſuch a caſe: " yea, happy is that people whoſe God is the Lord."

2. Taking away that which is our neighbour's by fraud, or by deceiving him, is another mode of uſurping our neighbour's property. This is the caſe, when men in their dealings take advantage of their neighbour's ignorance, or overſight, or miſtake, to get ſomething from him; or when they make their gains, by concealing the defects of what they ſell, putting off bad for good, tho' this be not done by ſpeaking falſely, but only by keeping ſilence; or when they take an higher price than what they ſell is really worth, and more than they could get for it if the concealed defects were known; or when they ſell that for good, which indeed is not merchantable, which is condemned in Amos viii. 6. " Yea, and ſell the refuſe of " the wheat."

If a man puts off ſomething to another with defects that are concealed, knowing that the other receives it as good, and pays ſuch a price for it, under a notion of its having no remarkable defect but what he ſees, and takes the price which the buyer under that notion offers; the ſeller knows that he takes a price of the buyer for that which the buyer had not of him; for the buyer is deceived, and pays for thoſe things which he finds wanting in what he buys. It is juſt the ſame thing, as if a man ſhould take a payment that another offers him, through a miſtake, for that which he never had of him, thinking that he had it of him, when he had it not.

So a man fraudulently takes away that which is his neighbour's, when he gets his money from him by falſely commending what he hath to ſell, above what he knows to be the true quality of it; and attributes thoſe good qualities to it which he knows it has not: or if he does not that, yet ſets forth the good qualities in a degreee beyond what he knows to be the true degree; or ſpeaks of the defects and ill qualities of what he has to ſell, as if they were much leſs than he knows they are: or, on the contrary, when the buyer will cry down what he is about to buy, contrary to his real opinion of the value of it.——Theſe things, however common they be in men's dealings one with another, are nothing ſhort of iniquity, and fraud, and a great breach of this commandment, upon which we are diſcourſing. Prov. xx. 14. " It is nought, it is nought, ſaith

" the

" the buyer; but when he is gone his way then he boaſt-
" eth."

Many other ways there are, whereby men blind and deceive one another in their trading, and whereby they fraudulently and unjuſtly take away that which is their neighbour's.

3. Another mode of unjuſtly invading and taking away our neighbour's property, is by violence. This violence may be done in different degrees.

(1.) Men may take away their neighbour's goods either by mere open violence, either making uſe of ſuperior ſtrength, forcibly taking away any thing that is his; or by expreſs or implicit threatenings forcing him to yield up what he has into their hands; as is done in open robbery and piracy. Or,

(2.) By making uſe of ſome advantages which they have over their neighbour, in their dealings with him, to conſtrain him to yield to their gaining unreaſonably of him; as when they take advantage of their neighbour's poverty to extort unreaſonably from him for thoſe things that he is under a neceſſity of procuring for himſelf or family. This is an oppreſſion againſt which God hath ſhown a great diſpleaſure in his word. Levit. xxv. 14. " And if " thou ſell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyeſt ought of " thy neighbour, ye ſhall not oppreſs one another." Prov. xxii. 22. 23. " Rob not the poor, becauſe he is poor, nei-
" ther oppreſs the afflicted in the gate: for the Lord will " plead their cauſe, and ſpoil the ſoul of thoſe that ſpoiled " them." And, Amos, iv. 1. 2. " Hear this word, ye " kine of Baſhan, that are in the mount of Samaria, " which oppreſs the poor, which cruſh the needy, the " Lord hath ſworn in his holineſs, that he will take " you away with hooks, and your poſterity with fiſh-
" hooks."

When the neceſſity of poor indigent people is the very thing whence others take occaſion to raiſe the price of proviſions, even above the market; this is ſuch an oppreſſion. There are many poor people whoſe families are in ſuch neceſſity of bread, that they in their extremity will give almoſt any price for it, rather than go without it. Thoſe who have to ſell, though hereby they have an advantage in their hands, yet ſurely ſhould not take the advantage to raiſe the price of proviſions. We ſhould doubtleſs think that we had juſt cauſe to complain, if we were in ſuch neceſſity as they are, and were reduced to their ſtraits, and

were

were treated in this manner: and let us remember, that it is owing only to the diſtinguiſhing goodneſs of God to us, that we are not in their circumſtances; and whatever our preſent circumſtances are, yet we know not but that the time may ſtill come when their caſe may be our's.

Men may oppreſs others, though they be not poor, if they will take advantage of any particular neceſſities of their neighbour's, unreaſonably to extort from him. The caſe may be ſo at particular ſeaſons, that thoſe who are not poor, may ſtand in particular and extraordinary need of what we have, or what we can do for them; ſo that it would be greatly to their diſadvantage or loſs to be without it. Now to take advantage of their urgent circumſtances, to get from them an unreaſonable price, is a violent dealing with our neighbours.

It is very unreaſonable talk to ſay, that ſuch and ſuch men are ſo rich, and get money ſo much more eaſily than I, that it is no hurt for me to take advantage when they are in ſpecial need, and make them give me, for work that I do for them, a great deal more than I would deſire to aſk of other men. Let ſuch conſider, whether, if they ſhould by any means hereafter get forward in the world, and come to have plentiful eſtates, they would like that perſons ſhould act upon ſuch principles towards them. That men are rich, gives us no more right to take away from them what is their's in this way, than it does to ſteal from them, becauſe they come eaſily by their property, and can do without it better than we.

Again, another thing that is a kind of violent taking from our neighbour what is his, is taking the advantage of the law to gain from others, when their cauſe in honeſty and conſcience is juſt and good. The circumſtances of mankind, their rights, poſſeſſions, and dealings one with another, are ſo various, that it is impoſſible that any body of human laws ſhould be contrived to ſuit all poſſible caſes and circumſtances. Hence the beſt laws may be abuſed and perverted to purpoſes contrary to the general deſign of laws, which is to maintain the rights and ſecure the properties of mankind. Human laws have a regard due to them, but always in ſubordination to the higher laws of God and nature. Therefore when it ſo happens, that we have an advantage by the law, to gain what the laws of moral honeſty allow not, it is an oppreſſion and violence to take the advantage. That human laws allow it, will not excuſe us before God, the Judge of the world, who will

will judge us another day by his own laws, and not by the laws of the commonwealth.

4. The fourth way of unjuſtly taking from our neighbour that which is his, is ſtealing ſo called. All unjuſt ways of taking away, or invading, or uſurping what is our neighbour's, are called ſtealing in the moſt extenſive uſe of the word, and all is included in the expreſſion in this command. Yet the word ſtealing, as it is more commonly uſed, is not of ſo great extent, and intends not all unjuſt invaſion of our neighbour's property, but only a particular kind of unjuſt taking. So that in common ſpeech when we ſpeak of fraudulent dealings, of extortion, unfaithfulneſs in our truſt, and of ſtealing, we underſtand different ſins by theſe expreſſions, though they are an uſurpation of what is our neighbour's.

Stealing, ſtrictly ſo called, may be thus defined, *A deſigned taking of our neighbour's goods from him, without his conſent or knowledge.* It is not merely a with-holding of what is our neighbour's, but a taking away; and therein it differs from unfaithfulneſs in our undertakings and betruſtments, and alſo from negligence in the payment of debts. It is a deſigned or wilful depriving of our neighbour of what is his, and ſo differs from wronging our neighbour in his eſtate through careleſſneſs or negligence. It is a taking of our neighbour's goods without his knowledge; it is a private, clandeſtine taking away, and ſo differs from robbery by open violence.

So alſo it differs from extortion; for in that the perſon knows what is taken from him. The aim of him that takes is no other than that he ſhould know it; for he makes uſe of other means than his ignorance, to obtain what is his neighbour's, viz. violence to conſtrain him to give it up. So alſo it differs from fraudulent dealing or trading. For though in fraudulent dealing the lawful poſſeſſor doth not underſtand the way and means, by which he parts with his goods, and by which his neighbour becomes poſſeſſed of them; yet he knows the fact: The deceiver deſignedly conceals the manner only. But in ſtealing, ſtrictly ſo called, he that takes, intends not that it ſhall be known that he takes. It alſo differs from extortion and fraudulent dealing, in that it is wholly without the conſent of the owner. For in extortion, though there be no free conſent; yet the conſent of the owner is in ſome ſort gained, though by violent and oppreſſive means. So in fraudulent dealing conſent is in ſome ſort

obtained, though it be by deceit. But in ſtealing no kind of conſent is obtained.

A perſon may ſteal from another, yet not take his goods without the knowledge of the owner; becauſe he may know of it accidentally, he may ſee what is done, unawares to the thief. Therefore I have defined ſtealing, a deſigned taking without the conſent or knowledge of the owner. If it be accidentally known, yet it is not known in the deſign and intention of the thief. The thief is ſo far at leaſt private in it, that he gives no notice to the owner in the time of it. It muſt be alſo without the conſent of the owner. A perſon may take without the knowledge of the owner, and yet not take without his conſent. The owner may not know of his taking at the time, or of his taking any particular things; yet there may be his implicit conſent. There may have been a general conſent, if not expreſſed, yet implied. The circumſtances of the affair may be ſuch, that his conſent may well be preſumed upon, either from an eſtabliſhed cuſtom, allowed by all, or from the nature of the caſe; the thing being of ſuch a nature, that it may well be preſumed that none would refuſe their conſent; as in the caſe of a perſon's accidentally paſſing through his neighbour's vineyard in Iſrael, and eating his fill of grapes: or from the circumſtances of the perſons, as is the caſe, in many inſtances, of the freedom which near neighbours and intimate friends often take, and of that boldneſs which they uſe with reſpect to each other's goods.

In all ſuch caſes, though the owner do not particularly know what is done, yet he that takes, does it not with any contrived, deſigned concealment. And though there is no expreſs, particular conſent, yet there is a conſent either implied, or juſtly preſumed upon; and he that takes, doth not deſignedly and advertently do it without conſent.

It may happen in ſome caſes, that one may take the goods of another, both without his knowledge and conſent, either explicit or implicit, but through miſtake; yet he may not be guilty of ſtealing. Therefore the *deſign* of him who takes muſt come into conſideration. When he deſignedly takes away that which is his neighbour's, without his conſent or knowledge, then he ſteals. So that if it ſhould happen, that he has both his conſent and knowledge, without his deſign, he ſteals. And if it ſo happen that he takes without either his neighbour's conſent or knowledge, and yet without his own deſign, he ſteals not.

I define therefore that this, which I take to be the true definition of theft or ſtealing, may be borne in mind, viz. A deſigned taking of our neighbour's goods, without his conſent or knowledge; becauſe it is needful to clear up many things which I have yet to ſay on this ſubject.

Here I ſhall particularly take notice of ſome things, by which ſome perſons may be ready to excuſe themſelves, in privately taking their neighbour's goods, which however cannot be a juſt excuſe for it, nor will they make ſuch a taking not to be ſtealing.

1. That the perſon whoſe goods are privately taken, owes or is in debt to him that takes them. Poſſibly ſome may be ready to excuſe a clandeſtine taking of their neighbour's goods, with this plea. They may be ready to ſay, that they do not take that which is their neighbour's, they take that which is their own, becauſe as much is due to them, their neighbour owes them as much, and unjuſtly detains it, and they know not whether ever they ſhall get their due of him. Their neighbour wont do them right, and therefore they muſt right themſelves.

But ſuch pleas as theſe will not juſtify a man in going in a private and clandeſtine manner to take away any thing of his neighbour's from his poſſeſſion, without his conſent or knowledge; but nevertheleſs his doing this is properly ſtealing. For though ſomething of his neighbour's, which is as valuable as what he takes, may be due to him; that doth not give him ſuch a right to his neighbour's goods, that he may take any thing that is his, according to his own pleaſure, and at what time, and in what manner he pleaſes. That his neighbour is in debt to him, doth not give him a right to take it upon himſelf to be his own judge, ſo that he may judge for himſelf, which of his neighbour's goods ſhall be taken from him to diſcharge the debt; and that he may act merely according to his own private judgement and pleaſure in ſuch a caſe, without ſo much as acquainting his neighbour with the affair.

In order to warrant ſuch a proceeding as this, every thing that his neighbour has, muſt be his. A man may not take indifferently what he pleaſes out of a number of goods, without the conſent or knowledge of any other perſon, unleſs all is his own, to be diſpoſed of as he pleaſes. Such a way of uſing goods according to our own pleaſure, taking what we will, and at what time we will,

can be warranted by nothing but a dominion over the whole. And though he who is in debt may be guilty of great injuſtice in detaining what is due to another; yet it doth not thence follow, but that he that takes from him, may alſo be guilty of great injuſtice towards him. The courſe he takes to right himſelf may be very irregular and unreaſonable; and ſuch a courſe, that if univerſally allowed and purſued in ſuch caſes, would throw human ſociety into confuſion.

When men obtain a property in any of the poſſeſſions of this life, at the ſame time they are alſo inveſted with a right to remain in poſſeſſion of them, till they are deprived of them in ſome fair and regular proceeding. Every man has a right to hold his eſtate, and keep poſſeſſion of his rights and properties, ſo that no other can lawfully uſe them as his own, until he either parts with them of his own accord, or until it be taken from him according to ſome eſtabliſhed rule, in a way of open juſtice. Therefore he who, under pretence of having juſt demands upon his neighbour, privately takes his goods without his conſent, takes them unjuſtly, and is guilty of ſtealing.

2. Much leſs will it make ſuch a private taking not to be ſtealing, that he who takes, has, in way of kindneſs or gift, done for the perſon from whom he takes, as much as is equivalent to the value of what he takes. If a man do his neighbour ſome conſiderable kindneſs, whether in labour, or in ſomething that he gives him, what he does or gives is ſuppoſed to be done voluntarily, and he is not to make his neighbour debtor for it; and therefore if any thing be privately taken away, upon any ſuch conſideration, it is groſs ſtealing.

For inſtance, when any perſon needs to have any ſervices done for him, where a conſiderable number of hands are neceſſary; it is common for the neighbourhood to meet together and join in helping their neighbour, and frequently ſome proviſion is made for their entertainment. If any perſon who hath aſſiſted on ſuch an occaſion, and is a partaker at ſuch an entertainment, ſhall think with himſelf, The ſervice I have done is worth a great deal more than what I ſhall eat and drink here, and therefore ſhall take liberty privately to take of the proviſion ſet before him, to carry away with him, purpoſely concealing the matter from him who hath entertained him, this is groſs ſtealing; and it is a very ridiculous plea which they make to excuſe ſo unmanly and vile an act.

Perſons

Perſons in ſuch caſes may ſay to themſelves, that the proviſion is made for them, and ſet before them; that it is a time wherein conſiderable liberty is given, and they think, ſeeing they have done ſo much for their hoſt, they may take ſomething more than they eat and drink there. But then let them be open in it; let them acquaint thoſe with it who make the entertainment; and let it not be done in any wiſe, in a ſecret, clandeſtine manner, with the leaſt deſign or attempt to avoid their notice: on the contrary, let care be taken to give them notice and obtain their conſent.

When perſons do ſuch things in a private manner, they condemn themſelves by their own act; their doing what they do ſecretly, ſhows that they are conſcious to themſelves, that they go beyond what it is expected they ſhould do, and do what would not be allowed, if it were known. Such an act, however light they may make of it, is abominable theft, and what any perſon of religion or any ſenſe of the dignity of their own nature, would to the greateſt degree abhor and deteſt.

3. It is not ſufficient to make a private taking without conſent, not to be ſtealing, that it is but a ſmall matter that is taken. If the thing be of little value, yet if it be worth a purpoſed concealing from the owner, the value is great enough to render the taking of it proper theft. If it be pretended that the thing is of ſo ſmall conſequence, that it is not worth aſking for; then ſurely it is not worth a purpoſed concealing from the owner, when it is taken. He who, under this pretence, conceals his taking, in the very act contradicts his own pretence; for his action ſhows that he apprehends, or at leaſt ſuſpects, that, as ſmall a matter as it is, the owner would not like the taking of it, if he knew it; otherwiſe the taker would not deſire to conceal it.

The owner of any goods, and not other people, is the proper judge, whether what he owns be of ſuch a value, that it is worth his while to keep it, and to refuſe his conſent to the taking of it from him. He who poſſeſſes, and not he who takes away, has a right to judge of what conſequence his poſſeſſions are to him. He has a right to ſet what value he pleaſes on them, and to treat them according to that value. Beſides, merely that a thing is of ſmall value, cannot give a right to others, purpoſely and deſignedly to take it away, without the knowledge or conſent of the owner. Becauſe if this only gives a right, then all have

have a right to take things of ſmall value; and at this rate a great number of perſons, each of them taking from a man that which is of ſmall value, might take away all he has.

Therefore, it will not juſtify perſons, in going purpoſely to take ſuch things as fruit from the trees, or gardens, or fields of their neighbours, without their knowledge or conſent, that the things which they take are things of ſmall value: nor is that ſufficient to render ſuch an act, not an act of theft properly ſo called. This ſhows alſo that the ſmallneſs of the value of what is privately taken at feaſts and entertainments, doth not render the taking of ſuch things not ſtealing.

The ſmall value of a thing may in ſome caſes juſtify an occaſional taking of things, ſo far as we may from thence, and from what is generally allowed, reaſonably preſume that the owner gives his conſent. But if that be the caſe, and perſons really take, as not ſuppoſing any other than that the owner conſents to ſuch occaſional taking, then he that takes will not at all endeavour to do what he does ſecretly, nor in any meaſure to avoid notice. But merely the ſmallneſs of the value of a thing, can never juſtify a ſecret taking of what is another's.

APPLICATION.

I. The firſt uſe I would make of this doctrine, is to warn againſt all injuſtice and diſhoneſty, as to what appertains to our neighbour's temporal goods or poſſeſſions. Let me warn all to avoid all ways of unjuſtly invading or uſurping what is their neighbour's, and let me preſs that exhortation of the apoſtle, Rom. xii. 17. "Provide things honeſt "in the ſight of all men;" which implies, that thoſe things which we provide for ourſelves, and uſe as our own, ſhould be ſuch as we come honeſtly by; and eſpecially that we ſhould avoid all clandeſtine or underhand ways of obtaining any thing that is our neighbour's, either by fraudulent dealing, or by that taking without our neighbour's knowledge and conſent, of which we have been ſpeaking.

I warn you to beware of diſhoneſty in with-holding what is your neighbour's, either by unfaithfulneſs to your truſt in any buſineſs which you undertake, or by with-holding your neighbour's juſt and honeſt dues. Conſider that ſaying of the apoſtle, Rom. xiii. 8. "Owe no man any thing, but

"to

" to love one another." Be alſo warned againſt wronging your neighbour or injuring him in his incloſures, or in any of his juſt rights and properties, through careleſs neglect of what is reaſonably expected by neighbours one of another, in order that they may live one by another without mutual injury. Let all beware that they bring not guilt on their ſouls in the ſight of God, by taking an advantage to oppreſs any perſon. Eſpecially beware of taking advantage of others poverty to extort from them: for God will defend their cauſe, and you will be no gainers by ſuch oppreſſion.

Beware alſo of all injuſtice by deceitful and fraudulent dealing. Many of you have much to do with others in a way of traffic in buying and ſelling. You doubtleſs meet with abundance of temptation to fraud, and have need to keep a ſtrong guard upon yourſelves. There are many temptations to falſe ſpeaking in trading, to ſpeaking that which is falſe, both about what you would buy and what you have to ſell. There are, in buying, temptations to do as in Prov. xx. 14. " It is nought, it is nought, ſaith the " buyer." There are many temptations to take indirect courſes, to blind thoſe with whom you deal, about the qualities of what you have to ſell, to diminiſh the defects of your commodities, or to conceal them, and to put off things for good, which are bad. And there are doubtleſs many other ways that men meet with temptations to deceive others, which your own experience will better ſuggeſt to you than I can.

But here I ſhall take occaſion to ſpeak of a particular kind of fraud, which is very aggravated, and is rather a defrauding of God than man. What I mean is, *the giving of that which is bad for good in public contributions.* Tho' it be matter of great ſhame and lamentation, that it ſhould be ſo in ſuch a place as this; yet it is to be feared, from what has ſometimes been obſerved, that there are ſome perſons among us, who, when there is a public contribution to be attended for the poor, or ſome other pious and charitable uſe, do ſometimes take that opportunity *to put off their bad money.* That which they find, or think, their neighbours will refuſe to take at their hands, becauſe they will have opportunity to ſee what is offered them, and to obſerve the badneſs of it, even *that* they therefore take opportunity to put off to God.

Hereby they ſave their credit; for they apprehend that they

they ſhall be concealed. They appear with others to go to the contribution, and it is not known, but that they put in that which is good. But they cheat the church of God, and defraud the expectations of the poor: Or rather they lie to God: For thoſe who receive what is given, ſtand as Chriſt's receivers, and not as acting for themſelves in this matter.

They that do thus, do that which is very much of the ſame nature with that ſin, againſt which God denounces that dreadful curſe in Mal. i. 14. "Curſed be the deceiver which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and ſacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, ſaith the Lord of hoſts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen." *That hath in his flock a male*, i. e. That has in his flock that which is good and fit to be offered to God: for it was the male of the flock principally that was appointed, in the law of Moſes, to be offered in ſacrifice to God. He has in his flock that which is good, but he vows and ſacrifices to the Lord, "the torn, the lame, and the ſick," as it is ſaid in the foregoing verſe; "ye ſaid alſo, Behold what a wearineſs is it, and ye have ſnuffed at it, ſaith the Lord of hoſts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the ſick; thus ye brought an offering: ſhould I accept this of your hands? ſaith the Lord."

Contributions in the Chriſtian church come in the room of ſacrifices in the Jewiſh church: mercy comes in the room of ſacrifice. And what is offered in the way of mercy is as much offered to God, as the ſacrifices of old were. For what is done to the poor is done to Chriſt, and he that hath pity on the poor, lendeth to the Lord; Prov. xix. 17. The Jews that offered the ſick and lame of the flock, knew that if they had offered it to their governor, and had attempted to put it off, as part of the tribute or public taxes due to their earthly rulers, it would not be accepted, and therefore they were willing to put it off to God, as in the eighth verſe of this chapter; "And if ye offer the blind for ſacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and ſick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleaſed with thee, or accept thy perſon? ſaith the Lord of hoſts."

So thoſe perſons who purpoſely put bad money into contributions, know that what they put in would not be accepted if they ſhould offer it to pay their public taxes.

Yea

Yea, they know that their *neighbours* would not accept it off their hands: and therefore they are willing to ſave themſelves, by putting it off to God.

This practice is alſo very much of the nature of the ſin of Annanias and Sapphira. What they offered was by way of contribution for charitable uſes. The brethren ſold what they had, and brought it into a common ſtock, and put all under the care of deacons, that the poor might every one be ſupplied. Annanias and Sapphira brought a part of their poſſeſſions, and put it into the common ſtock; and their ſin was, that they put it in for more than it really was. It was but a part of what they had, and they put it in, and would have it accepted, as if it had been all. So thoſe among us, of whom I am ſpeaking, put off what they put into the charitable ſtock, for more than it is. For they put it in, under the notion that it is ſomething of ſome value; they intend it ſhall be ſo taken by the church that ſees them go to the contribution, when indeed they put in nothing at all.

Annanias and Sapphira were charged with lying to God, and doing an act of fraud towards God himſelf, in what they did: Acts v. 4. "Whiles it remained, was it not "thine own? And after it was ſold, was it not in thine "own power? Why haſt thou conceived this thing in "thine heart? Thou haſt not lied unto men, but unto "God." So thoſe who knowingly put bad money for good into a contribution for a charitable uſe, as much as in them lies commit an act of fraud and deceit towards God. For the deacons who receive what is contributed, receive it not in their own names, but as Chriſt's receivers. I hope theſe things may be ſufficient to have ſaid on this head, and enough to deter every one from ever daring to do ſuch a thing for the future.

Again, another thing I would warn you againſt, is, ſtealing, properly and ſtrictly ſo called; or deſignedly taking away any of your neighbour's goods without his conſent or knowledge. And eſpecially I would now take occaſion to warn againſt a practice which is very common in the country, particularly among children and young people: and that is, ſtealing fruit from their neighbours trees or incloſures. There is a licentious liberty taken by many children and young people, in making bold with their neighbours fruit; and it is to be feared, that they are too much countenanced in it by their parents and many elder people.

I am ſenſible, that the great thing which is pleaded, and made very much the ground of this liberty which is taken, and ſo much tolerated, is a very abuſive and unreaſonable conſtruction and application of that text of ſcripture in Deut. xxiii. 24. "When thou comeſt into thy neighbour's "vineyard, then thou mayſt eat grapes thy fill. But thou "ſhalt not put any in thy veſſel." Becauſe this text ſeems to be ſo much miſtaken and miſimproved, I ſhall therefore endeavour particularly to ſtate the matter of perſons taking their neighbour's fruit, and to ſet it in a juſt and clear light as concerning this text. (1.) I ſhall ſhow what the liberty was which was given in it. (2.) What the ground of that liberty was. (3.) What would, and what would not be parallel with it, among us.

1. I am to ſhow what the liberty was which was given in this text. It was to eat their fill of grapes when they occaſionally came into or paſſed through their neighbour's vineyard, and not that they ſhould go thither on purpoſe to eat grapes. This is manifeſt by the manner of expreſſion: "When thou comeſt into thy neighbour's vineyard, "thou mayeſt eat;" *i. e.* when thou art come thither on ſome other occaſion. If God had meant to give them leave to come thither on purpoſe, for no other end, it would not have been expreſſed ſo; but rather thus, Thou mayeſt come into thy neighbour's vineyard, and eat grapes thy fill.

2. I ſhall ſhow what muſt be ſuppoſed to be the grounds of this liberty; which were theſe two things:

(1.) That ſuch were the circumſtances of that people, and vineyards among them were ſo common, that there was no danger that this liberty would be attended with ill conſequence. It is manifeſt throughout the hiſtory of Iſrael, that vineyards among them were ſo common that the people in general had them. Every huſbandman among them was a vinedreſſer; and a great part of the buſineſs of a huſbandman among them, conſiſted in dreſſing and taking care of his vineyards. Grapes ſeem to have been the moſt common ſort of fruit that they had. Beſides, there was no liberty given for perſons to go on purpoſe to a vineyard to eat the fruit of it. So that there was no danger of neighbours ſuffering one by another, by any ſuch liberty.

Not only would not the owner of the vineyard ſuffer any thing ſenſible, if one or two men ſhould act upon the liberty granted in this text; but the liberty did not tend to any ſuch conſequence, as the flocking of a great number to

to eat grapes, whereby the fruit of the vineyard might be much diminiſhed.

(2.) Such were the circumſtances of the caſe, that the conſent of the owners of vineyards in general might well be preſumed upon, though no ſuch expreſs liberty had been given. You may remember, that in the definition of ſtealing, I obſerved, that explicit conſent is not always neceſſary; becauſe the caſe may be ſo circumſtanced, that conſent may well be preſumed on. And the reaſon conſent might well be preſumed on in the caſe of eating grapes, of which we are now ſpeaking, is, what was obſerved juſt now, that there could be no ſenſible injury, nor any danger of any ill conſequences, by which a man would ſenſibly ſuffer in the benefit of his vineyard. Hence it is the more eaſy to determine,

3. What would, and what would not be parallel with this eating of grapes; or what would and what would not be juſtified by this text, among us.

(1.) If ſome particular perſon among us had a vineyard of the ſame kind of grapes with thoſe which the children of Iſrael had, it would not juſtify others in uſing the ſame liberty when occaſionally paſſing through it. Becauſe, if ſome one perſon among us had ſuch a vineyard, it would be a rare thing, and the rarity and ſcarcity of the fruit would render it of much greater value. Beſides, if one man were diſtinguiſhed by ſuch a poſſeſſion, to allow of ſuch a liberty would have a much greater tendency to ill conſequences, than if they were common, as they were in the land of Canaan. There would be danger of many perſons falſely pretending occaſions, and making occaſions, to paſs through the vineyard, for the ſake of their fill of ſuch rare fruit.

(2.) It would not be a parallel caſe, if men in general among us had each of them a few vines. That would be a very different thing from perſons in general having large vineyards, as they had in Canaan. Nor would this text, in ſuch a caſe, warrant mens eating their fill of grapes when occaſionally paſſing by.

(3.) If all in general had vineyards, as they had in the land of Canaan, this text would not juſtify men in going into their neighbour's vineyard on purpoſe to eat the fruit. No ſuch liberty is given in the text. If there had been ſuch liberty, it might have been of ill conſequence. For the ſake of ſaving their own grapes, men might make a practice of

going and ſending their children into their neighbours vineyards, to eat their fill from time to time.

But the liberty given in this text to the children of Iſrael, ſeems to be very parallel with the liberty taken among us, to take up an apple or two and eat, as we are occaſionally paſſing through a neighbour's orchard; which, as our circumſtances are, we may do and juſtly preſume that we have the owner's conſent. This is a liberty that we take, and find no ill conſequences. It was very much ſo with vineyards in the land of Canaan, as it is with orchards among us. Apples in ſome countries are a rare fruit; and there it would by no means be warrantable for perſons to take the ſame liberty, when occaſionally paſſing by their neighbour's apple-tree, which we warrantably take here, when going through a neighbour's orchard.

The conſideration of theſe things will eaſily ſhow the great abuſe that is made of this text, when it is brought to juſtify ſuch a reſorting of children and others to their neighbour's fruit-trees, as is ſometimes, on purpoſe to take and eat the fruit. Indeed this practice is not only not juſtified by the law of Moſes, but it is in itſelf unreaſonable, and contrary to the law of nature. The conſequences of it are pernicious, ſo that a man can have no dependence on enjoying the fruit of his labour, or the benefit of his property in thoſe things, which poſſibly he may very much value. He can have no aſſurance but that he ſhall be mainly deprived of what he has, and that others will not have the principal benefit of it; and ſo that his end in planting and cultivating that from which he expected thoſe fruits of the earth, which God hath given for the uſe, comfort, and delight of mankind, will not be in the main fruſtrated.

II. The ſecond uſe may be of *exhortation*. Under this uſe, I ſhall confine myſelf to two particulars, many other things having been already ſpoken to.

1. I ſhall hence take occaſion to exhort parents to reſtrain their children from ſtealing, and particularly from being guilty of theft in ſtealing the fruits of their neighbours trees or fields. Chriſtian parents are obliged to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But how much otherwiſe do they bring up their children, who bring them up in theft! which certainly thoſe parents are guilty of, not only who directly teach them to ſteal, ſet them an example and ſet them about it, but alſo thoſe who tolerate them in it.

Parents

Parents ſhould take thorough and effectual care, not only to inſtruct their children better, and to warn them againſt any ſuch thieviſh practices, but alſo thoroughly to reſtrain them. Children who practiſe ſtealing, make themſelves vile Stealing, by the common conſent of mankind, is a very vile practice: therefore thoſe parents that will not take thorough care to reſtrain their children from ſuch a practice, will be guilty of the ſame ſin which God ſo highly reſented, and awfully puniſhed in *Eli*, of which we read, 1 Sam. iii. 13. For I have told him, that I will judge his houſe for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; becauſe his ſons made themſelves vile, and he reſtrained them not.

2. I exhort thoſe who are conſcious in themſelves that they have heretofore wronged their neighbour, to make reſtitution. This is a duty the obligation to which is exceeding plain. If a perſon was wronged in taking away any thing that was his, certainly he is wronged alſo in detaining it and keeping it away: and all the while a perſon, who has been guilty of wronging his neighbour, neglects to make reſtitution, he lives in that wrong: he not only lives impenitent of that firſt wrong, of which he was guilty, but he continually wrongs his neighbour. A man who hath gotten any thing from another wrongfully, goes on to wrong him every day that he neglects to reſtore it, when he has opportunity to do it. The perſon injured did not only ſuffer wrong from the other when his goods were firſt taken from him, but he ſuffers new injuſtice from him all the while they are unjuſtly kept from him.

Therefore I counſel all thoſe of you that are ſenſible that you have heretofore wronged your neighbour, either by fraud, or oppreſſion, or unfaithfulneſs, or ſtealing, whether lately or formerly, though it may have been a great while ago, ſpeedily to go and make reſtitution for all the wrong your neighbour has ſuffered of your hands. That it was done long ago, doth not quit you from obligation ſtill to reſtore, as much as if it had been done yeſterday. This is a duty with which you muſt comply; you cannot be acquitted without it. As long as you neglect it, it will be unreaſonable in you to expect any forgiveneſs of God. For what ground can you have to think that God will pardon you, as long as you wilfully ſtill continue in the ſame wrong, and wrong the ſame man ſtill every day, by detaining from him that which is his? You in your prayers aſk of God, that he would forgive all your ſins; but your very

prayers

prayers are mockery, if you ſtill wilfully continue in thoſe ſins.

Indeed, if you go and confeſs your faults to your neighbour, and he will freely acquit you from making reſtitution, you will be acquitted from the obligation; for in ſo doing, your neighbour gives you what before was his. But otherwiſe you cannot be acquitted.

Particularly I would leave this advice with all, for their direction in their behaviour on their death-beds. Indeed you ſhould not by any means put it off till you come to die; and you will run the moſt fearful riſk in ſo doing. But if you will not do it now, while you are in health, I will leave it with you to remember, when you ſhall come to lie on your death-beds. Doubtleſs, then, if you have the uſe of your reaſon, you will be concerned for the ſalvation of your poor ſouls. And let this be one thing then remembered, as abſolutely neceſſary in order to your ſalvation, that before you die, you muſt make reſtitution for whatever wrong you ſhall have done any of your neighbours; or at leaſt leave orders that ſuch reſtitution be made; otherwiſe you will, as it were, go out of the world, and go before your Great Judge, with ſtolen goods in your hands. And certainly it will not be very comfortable or ſafe, to bring them into his infinitely holy and dreadful preſence, when he ſits on his throne of judgement, with his eyes as a flame of fire, being more pure than to look on iniquity; when he is about to ſentence you to your everlaſting unalterable ſtate.

Every one here preſent, who has been guilty of wronging his neighbour, and has not yet made reſtitution, muſt die. Let all ſuch therefore remember this counſel now given them, on the day when death ſhall approach, if they ſhall be ſo fooliſh as to neglect it till that time.

SER.

SERMON XXIX.*

The Duty of *Charity* to the Poor, explained and enforced.

DEUT. xv. 7.—12.

If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates, in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou ſhalt not harden thy heart, nor ſhut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou ſhalt open thine hand wide unto him, and ſhalt ſurely lend him ſufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, ſaying, The ſeventh year, the year of releaſe is at hand: and thine eye be evil againſt thy poor brother, and thou giveſt him nought, and he cry unto the Lord againſt thee, and it be ſin unto thee. Thou ſhalt ſurely give him, and thine heart ſhall not be grieved when thou giveſt unto him: becauſe that for this thing the Lord thy God ſhall bleſs thee in all thy works, and in all that thou putteſt thine hand unto. For the poor ſhall never ceaſe out of the land: therefore I command thee, ſaying, Thou ſhalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.

OBſerve in theſe words,

1. The duty here enjoined, viz. giving to the poor: "If "there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, "thou ſhalt not harden thy heart, nor ſhut thine hand "from thy poor brother:—Thou ſhalt ſurely give him." Here by *thy poor brother* is to be underſtood the ſame as in other places is meant by *neighbour*. It is explained in

* Dated January 1732-3.

Levit.

Levit. xxv. 35. to mean not only thoſe of their own nation, but even ſtrangers and ſojourners: "And if thy brother be "waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou "ſhalt relieve him: yea, though he be *a ſtranger*, or *a ſo-* "*journer*." The Phariſees indeed interpreted it to ſignify only one of their own nation; but Chriſt condemns this interpretation, Luke x. 29. 30. &c.; and there teaches, in contradiction to their opinion, that the rules of charity, in the law of Moſes, are to be extended to the Samaritans, who were not of their nation, and between whom and the Jews there was the moſt bitter enmity, and who were a people very troubleſome to the Jews.

2. God gives us direction *how* we are to give in ſuch a caſe, in two things

(1.) That we ſhould give *bountifully*, and *ſufficiently* for the ſupply of his needs: verſ. 7. 8. "Thou ſhalt not ſhut "up thine hand from thy poor brother; but thou ſhalt "open thine hand wide unto him, and lend him ſufficient "for his need, in that which he wanteth." And again, in verſ. 11. "Thou ſhalt open thine hand wide unto thy bro- "ther, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land."

(2.) That we ſhould give *willingly* and *without grudging*: verſ. 7. "Thou ſhalt not harden thy heart from thy poor "brother;" and verſ. 10. "And thine heart ſhall not be "grieved when thou giveſt him."

3. We may obſerve how peremptorily this duty is here enjoined, and how much it is here inſiſted on. It is repeated over and over again, and is enjoined in the ſtrongeſt terms: verſ. 7. "Thou ſhalt not harden thy heart, nor "ſhut thine hand from thy poor brother;" verſ. 8. "But "thou ſhalt open thine hand wide unto him;" verſ. 10. "Thou ſhalt ſurely give him;" verſ. 11. "I command thee, "ſaying, Thou ſhalt open thine hand wide unto thy bro- "ther, to thy poor, and to thy needy."

4. God ſtrictly warns againſt objections, verſ. 9. "Be- "ware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, "ſaying, The ſeventh year, the year of releaſe is at hand: "and thine eye be evil againſt thy poor brother, and thou "giveſt him nought, and he cry unto the Lord againſt thee, "and it be ſin unto thee." The matter concerning the ſeventh year, or year of releaſe, was thus: God had given Iſrael a law in the beginning of this chapter, that every ſeventh year ſhould be a year of releaſe; that if any man had lent any thing to any of his poor neighbours, if the latter had not been able to repay it before that year, the former ſhould releaſe

releaſe it, and ſhould not exact it of his neighbour, but give it to him. Therefore God warns the children of Iſrael againſt making an objection to helping their poor neighbours, of this, that the year of releaſe was near at hand; and it was not likely that they would be able to refund it again before that time, and then they ſhould loſe it wholly, becauſe then they would be obliged to releaſe it. God foreſaw that the wickedneſs of their hearts would be very ready to make ſuch an objection; but God very ſtrictly warns them againſt it, that they ſhould not be the more backward to ſupply the wants of the needy for that, but ſhould be willing to give him: "Thou ſhalt be willing to lend, expect-" ing nothing again."

Men are exceedingly apt to make objections againſt ſuch duties, which God ſpeaks of here as a manifeſtation of the wickedneſs of their hearts: "Beware that there be " not a thought in thy wicked heart," &c. The warning is very ſtrict. God doth not only ſay, Beware that thou do not actually refuſe to give him; but, Beware that thou have not one objecting thought againſt it, ariſing from a backwardneſs to liberality. God warns againſt the beginnings of uncharitableneſs in the heart, and againſt whatever tends to a forbearance to give: "And thou give him naught, " and he cry unto the Lord againſt thee, and it be ſin unto " thee." God warns them, from the guilt which they would be liable to bring upon themſelves hereby.

5. We may obſerve here ſeveral enforcements of this duty. There is a reaſon of this duty implied in God's calling him that is needy, *our brother*: "Thou ſhalt not ſhut thine " hand from thy poor *brother*;" and verſ. 9. "Beware that " thine eye be not evil againſt thy poor *brother*;" and verſ. 11. "Thou ſhalt open thine hand wide to thy *brother*." We are to look upon ourſelves as related to all mankind, but eſpecially to thoſe who are of the viſible people of God. We are to look upon them as brethren, and to treat them accordingly. We ſhall be baſe indeed, if we be not willing to help *a brother* in want.

Another enforcement of this duty, is the promiſe of God, that for this thing he will bleſs us in all our works, and in all that we put our hands unto; a promiſe that we ſhall not loſe, but gain by it, as verſ. 10.

Another is, that we ſhall never want proper objects of our charity and bounty: verſ. 11. "For the poor ſhall ne-" ver ceaſe out of thy land." This God ſaith to the Jewiſh church; and the like Chriſt ſaith to the Chriſtian church,

Matth. xxvi. 11. "The poor ye have always with you." This is to cut off an excuſe that uncharitable perſons would be ready to make for not giving, that they could find no body to give to, that they ſaw none that needed. Here, and in that other place in Matthew, God cuts off ſuch an excuſe, by telling us, that he would ſo order it in his providence, that his people every where, and in all ages, ſhall have occaſion for the exerciſe of that virtue.

DOCTRINE. It is the abſolute and indiſpenſable duty of a people of God, to give bountifully and willingly for the ſupply of the wants of the needy.

Upon this doctrine I ſhall ſpeak under three propoſitions.

PROP. I. It is the duty of the people of God, to give *bountifully* for the aforeſaid purpoſe. It is commanded once and again in the text, "Thou ſhalt open thine hand wide un- "to thy poor brother." Merely to give ſomething is not ſufficient; it anſwers not the rule, nor comes up to the holy command of God; but we muſt open our hand wide. What we give, conſidering our neighbour's wants, and our ability, ſhould be ſuch as may be called a *liberal* gift. What is meant in the text by opening the hand wide, with reſpect to thoſe that are able, is explained in verſ. 8.: "Thou ſhalt "open thine hand wide unto him, and ſhalt ſurely lend "him ſufficient for his want, in that which he needeth." By lending here, as is evident by the two following verſes, and as we have juſt now ſhown, is not only meant lending to receive again; the word *lend* in ſcripture is ſometimes uſed for giving; as in Luke vi. 35. "Do good and lend, hoping "for nothing again."

We are commanded, therefore, to give our poor neighbour what is ſufficient for his need. There ought to be none ſuffered to live in pinching want, among a viſible people of God, that are able to cauſe it to be otherwiſe; unleſs in caſe of idleneſs, or prodigality, or ſome ſuch caſe which the word of God excepts.

It is ſaid in the beginning of the chapter wherein is the text, that the children of Iſrael ſhould lend to the poor, and in the year of releaſe ſhould releaſe what they had lent, *ſave when there ſhould be no poor among them.* It is rendered in the margin, *to the end there be no poor among you;* i. e. you ſhould ſo ſupply the wants of the needy, that there may

may be none among you in pinching want. This tranſlation ſeems the more likely to be the true one, becauſe God ſays, in verſ. 11. that there ſhall be no ſuch time when there ſhall be no poor, who ſhall be proper objects of charity.

When perſons give very ſparingly, it is no manifeſtation of charity, but of a contrary ſpirit: 2 Cor. ix. 5. "Therefore I thought it neceſſary to exhort the brethren, that "they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that "the ſame might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not "as of covetouſneſs." The apoſtle here calls a very ſparing contribution, matter of covetouſneſs.

PROP. II. It is the duty of the viſible people of God, to give for the ſupply of the needy, freely, and without grudging. It doth not at all anſwer the rule in the ſight of God, if it be done with an inward grudging, or if the heart be grieved, and it inwardly hurt the man to give what he gives: "Thou "ſhalt ſurely give," ſays God, "and thine heart ſhall not "be grieved." God looks at the heart, and the hand is not accepted without it: 2 Cor. ix. 7. "Every man accordding as he hath purpoſed in his heart, ſo let him give, "not grudgingly, or of neceſſity; for God loveth a cheerful giver."

PROP. III. This is a duty to which a people of God are under very ſtrict obligations. It is not merely a commendable thing for a man to be kind and bountiful to the poor, but our bounden duty, as much a duty as it is to pray, or to attend public worſhip, or any thing elſe whatever; and the neglect of it brings great guilt upon any perſon; as appears by the following things.

1. As it is ſo abſolutely commanded, and ſo much inſiſted on in the word of God. Where have we any command in the Bible laid down in ſtronger terms, and in a more peremptory urgent manner, than the command of giving to the poor in the text? We have the ſame law again in a poſitive manner laid down in Levit. xxv. 35. &c. "And if "thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, "then thou ſhalt relieve him; yea, though he be a ſtranger or a ſojourner, that he may live with thee." And at the concluſion of verſ. 38. God enforces it with this, *I am the Lord thy God.*

It is mentioned in ſcripture, not only as a duty, but a

great duty. Indeed it is generally acknowledged to be a duty, to be kind to the needy; but by many it ſeems not to be looked upon as a duty of great importance. However, it is mentioned in ſcripture as one of the greater and more eſſential duties of religion: Micah vi. 8. "He hath ſhowed "thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord thy "God require of thee, but to do juſtly, *to love mercy*, and "to walk humbly with thy God?" Here *to love mercy* is mentioned as one of the three great things that are the ſum of all religion. So it is mentioned by the Apoſtle James, as one of the two things wherein pure and undefiled religion conſiſts: James i. 27. "Pure religion, and undefiled, "before God and the Father, is this, To viſit the fatherleſs "and widows in their affliction, and to keep himſelf unſpot-"ted from the world."

So Chriſt tells us, it is one of the weightier matters of the law: Matth. xxiii. 23. "Ye have omitted the weightier "matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and faith." The ſcriptures again and again teach us, that it is a more weighty and eſſential thing than the attendance on the outward ordinances of worſhip: Hoſ. vi. 6. "I deſired mercy, and "not ſacrifice;" Matth. ix. 13. and xii. 7. I know of ſcarce any duty which is ſo much inſiſted upon, ſo preſſed and urged upon us, both in the Old Teſtament and the New, as this duty of charity to the poor.

2. The reaſon of the thing ſtrongly obliges to it. It is not only very poſitively and frequently inſiſted on by God, but it is moſt reaſonable in itſelf; and ſo, on this account, there is reaſon why God ſhould much inſiſt upon it.

(1.) It is moſt reaſonable, conſidering the general ſtate and nature of mankind. This is ſuch as renders it moſt reaſonable that we ſhould love our neighbour as ourſelves; for men are made in the image of God, and on this account are worthy of our love. Beſides, we are all nearly allied one to another by nature. We have all the ſame nature, like faculties, like diſpoſitions, like deſires of good, like needs, like averſion to miſery, and are made of one blood; and we are made to ſubſiſt by ſociety and union one with another. God hath made us with ſuch a nature, that we cannot ſubſiſt without the help of one another. Mankind in this reſpect are as the members of the natural body are, one cannot ſubſiſt alone, without an union with, and the help of the reſt.

Now, this ſtate of mankind ſhows how reaſonable and ſuitable

ſuitable it is, that men ſhould love their neighbours; and that we ſhould not look every one at his own things, but every man alſo at the things of others, Phil. ii. 4. A ſelfiſh ſpirit is very unſuitable to the nature and ſtate of mankind. He who is all for himſelf, and none for his neighbours, deſerves to be cut off from the benefit of human ſociety, and to be turned out among wild beaſts, to ſubſiſt by himſelf as well as he can. A private niggardly ſpirit is more ſuitable for wolves, and other beaſts of prey, than for human beings.

To love our neighbour as ourſelves, is the ſum of the moral law reſpecting our fellow-creatures; and to help them, and to contribute to their relief, is the moſt natural expreſſion of this love. It is vain to pretend to a ſpirit of love to our neighbour, when it is grievous to us to part with any thing for their help, when under calamity. They that love only in word, and in tongue, and not in deed, have no love in truth. Any profeſſion without it is a vain pretence.

To refuſe to give to them that are needy, is unreaſonable; becauſe we therein do to others contrary to what we would have others do to us in like circumſtances. We are very ſenſible of our own calamities; and when we ſuffer, are ready enough to think, that our ſtate requires the compaſſion and help of others; and are ready enough to think hard, if others will not deny themſelves, to help us when in ſtraits.

(2.) It is eſpecially reaſonable, conſidering our circumſtances, under ſuch a diſpenſation of grace as that of the goſpel. Conſidering how much God hath done for us, how greatly he hath loved us, and what he hath given us, when we were ſo unworthy, and when he could have no addition to his happineſs by us; conſidering that ſilver, and gold, and earthly crowns, were in his eſteem but mean things to give us, and he hath therefore given us his own Son; conſidering how Chriſt loved and pitied us, when we were poor, and how he laid out himſelf to help, and even ſhed his own blood for us, without grudging; how he did not think much to deny himſelf, and to be at ſuch great coſt, for us vile wretches, not merely to relieve us in ſome meaſure, and to deliver us from the extremity of want, but to make us rich, and to clothe us with kingly robes, when we were naked; to feaſt us at his own table with dainties infinitely coſtly, when we were ſtarving; to advance us from the

the dunghill, and ſet us among princes, and make us to inherit the throne of his glory, and ſo to give us the enjoyment of the greateſt wealth and plenty to all eternity; agreeably to 2 Cor. viii. 9. "For ye know the grace of our "Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that though he was rich, yet for your "ſakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might "be rich:"—I ſay, conſidering all theſe things, what a poor buſineſs will it be, that thoſe who hope to ſhare theſe benefits, yet cannot give ſomething for the relief of a poor neighbour without grudging! that it ſhould grieve them to part with a ſmall matter, to help a fellow-ſervant in calamity, when Chriſt did not grudge to ſhed his own blood for them!

How unſuitable is it for us, who live only by kindneſs, to be unkind! What would have become us, if Chriſt had been ſo choice and ſaving of his blood, and loth to beſtow it, as many men are of their money or goods? if he had been as ready to excuſe himſelf from dying for us, as men commonly are to excuſe themſelves from charity to their neighbour? If Chriſt would have made objections of ſuch things, as men commonly object to performing deeds of charity to their neighbour, he would have found enough of them.

Beſides, Chriſt, by his redemption, has brought us into a more near relation one to another, hath made us children of God, children in the ſame family. We are all brethren, having God for our common Father; which is much more than to be brethren in any other family. He hath made us all one body; therefore we ought to be united, and ſubſerve one another's good, and bear one another's burdens, as is the caſe with the members of the ſame natural body. If one of the members ſuffer, all the other members bear the burden with it, 1 Cor. xii. 26. If one member be diſeaſed or wounded, the other members of the body will miniſter to it, and help it. So ſurely it ſhould be in the body of Chriſt: Gal. vi. 2. "Bear ye one another's "burdens, and ſo fulfil the law of Chriſt."

A P.

APPLICATION.

I. The firſt uſe ſhall be of ſelf-examination. Apply theſe things to yourſelves, and inquire, whether you do not lie under guilt on account of the neglect of this duty, in withholding that charity which God requires of you towards the needy. You have often been put upon examining yourſelves, whether you do not live in ſome way diſpleaſing to God. Perhaps at ſuch times it never came into your minds, whether you did not lie under guilt on this account. But this neglect certainly brings guilt upon the ſoul in the ſight of God, as is evident by the text: "Beware that thine eye "be not evil againſt thy poor brother, and thou giveſt him "nought, and he cry unto the Lord againſt thee, and it "be ſin unto thee," verſ. 9. This is often mentioned as one of the ſins of Judah and Jeruſalem, for which God was about to bring ſuch terrible judgements upon them; and it was one of the ſins of Sodom, for which that city was deſtroyed, that ſhe did not give to ſupply the poor and needy, Ezek. xvi. 49. "This was the iniquity of thy ſiſter "Sodom, pride, fulneſs of bread, and abundance of idle-"neſs in her, and in her daughters; neither did ſhe ſtrengthen the hand of the poor and needy."

And have we not reaſon to fear, that much guilt lies upon this land on this very account? We in this land have an high conceit of ourſelves for religion: but do not many other countries ſhame us? Do not the Papiſts and Quakers, whom we abhor, ſhame us in this reſpect? So far as I can underſtand the tenor of the Chriſtian religion, and the rules of the word of God, the ſame are in no meaſure in this reſpect anſwered by the general practice of moſt people in this land. There are many who make an high profeſſion of religion; but do not many of them need to be informed by the Apoſtle James, what true religion is?

Let every one examine himſelf, whether he do not lie under guilt in this matter. Have you not forborn to give, when you have ſeen your brother in want? Have you not ſhut up the bowels of your compaſſion towards him, and forborn to deny yourſelves a little for his relief? Or when you have given, have you not done it grudgingly? And has it not inwardly hurt and grieved you? You have looked upon what you have given, as loſt: So that what you

you have given, has been, as the apoſtle expreſſes it, a matter of covetouſneſs, rather than of bounty. Have not occaſions of giving been unwelcome to you? Have you not been uneaſy under them? Have you not felt a conſiderable backwardneſs and lothneſs to give? Have you not, from a grudging, backward ſpirit, been apt to raiſe objections againſt giving, and to excuſe yourſelves? Such things as theſe bring guilt upon the ſoul, and often bring down the curſe of God upon the perſons in whom theſe things are found, as we may ſhow more fully hereafter.

SER.

SERMON XXX.

The Duty of *Charity* to the Poor, explained and enforced.

DEUT. XV. 7.—12.

If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates, in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou ſhalt not harden thy heart, nor ſhut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou ſhalt open thine hand wide unto him, and ſhalt ſurely lend him ſufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, ſaying, The ſeventh year, the year of releaſe is at hand: and thine eye be evil againſt thy poor brother, and thou giveſt him nought, and he cry unto the Lord againſt thee, and it be ſin unto thee. Thou ſhalt ſurely give him, and thine heart ſhall not be grieved when thou giveſt unto him: becauſe that for this thing the Lord thy God ſhall bleſs thee in all thy works, and in all that thou putteſt thine hand unto. For the poor ſhall never ceaſe out of the land: therefore I command thee, ſaying, Thou ſhalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.

DOCTRINE. IT is a moſt abſolute and indiſpenſable duty, to give bountifully and willingly for the ſupply of the wants of the needy.

I have already diſcuſſed this doctrine under *three* propoſitions, and have alſo applied it in one uſe of *ſelf-examination*, and ſhall now proceed,

II. To an uſe of exhortation to this duty. We are profeſſors of Chriſtianity, we pretend to be the followers of Jeſus, and to make the goſpel our rule: We have the Bible in our houſes. Let us not behave ourſelves in this particular, as if we had never ſeen the Bible, as if we were ignorant of Chriſtianity, and knew not what kind of religion it is. What will it ſignify to pretend to be Chriſtians, and at the ſame time to live in the neglect of the rules of Chriſtianity, which are mainly inſiſted on in it? But there are ſeveral things which I would here propoſe to your conſideration.

1. Conſider that what you have is not your own; i. e. You have no abſolute right to it; you have only a ſubordinate right. Your goods are only lent to you of God, to be improved by you in ſuch ways as he directs you. You yourſelves are not your own; 1 Cor. vi. 20. "Ye are "not your own, for ye are bought with a price; your bo-"dy and your ſpirit—are God's." And if you yourſelves are not your own, ſo then neither are your poſſeſſions your own. You have many of you by covenant given up yourſelves and all you have to God. You have diſowned and renounced any right in yourſelves or in any thing that you have, and have given God all the abſolute right; and if you be true Chriſtians, you have done it from the heart.

Your money and your goods are not your own, they are only committed to you as ſtewards, to be uſed for him who committed them to you; 1 Pet. iv. 9. 10. "Uſe hoſpitali-"ty one to another without grudging. As every man hath "received the gift, even ſo miniſter the ſame one to ano-"ther, as good ſtewards of the manifold grace of God." A ſteward has no buſineſs with his maſter's goods, to uſe them any otherwiſe than for the benefit of his maſter and his family, or according to his maſter's direction. He hath no buſineſs to uſe them, as if he were the proprietor of them; he hath nothing to do with them, only as he is to uſe them for his maſter. He is to give every one of his maſter's family their portion of meat in due ſeaſon.

But if inſtead of that, he hoards up his maſter's goods for himſelf, and with-holds them from thoſe of the houſehold, ſo that ſome of the family are pinched for want of food and clothing; he is therein guilty of robbing his maſter and embezzling his ſubſtance. And would any houſeholder endure ſuch a ſteward? If he diſcovered him in ſuch a practice, would he not take his goods out of his hands,

hands, and commit them to the care of ſome other ſteward, who ſhould give every one of his family his portion of meat in due ſeaſon. We muſt remember that we muſt all of us give account of our ſtewardſhip, and how we have diſpoſed of thoſe goods that our maſter has put into our hands. And if when our maſter comes to reckon with us, it be found that we have denied ſome of his family their proper proviſion, while we have hoarded up for ourſelves, as if we had been the proprietors of our maſter's goods, what account ſhall we give of this?

2. Conſider that God tells us that he ſhall look upon what is done in charity to our neighbours in want, as done unto him, and what is denied unto them, as denied unto him. Prov. xix. 17. "He that hath pity on the poor "lendeth to the Lord." God hath been pleaſed to make our needy neighbours his receivers. He in his infinite mercy hath ſo intereſted himſelf in their caſe, that he looks upon what is given in charity to them, as given to himſelf: and when we deny them what their circumſtances require of us, he looks upon it that we therein rob him of his right.

So Chriſt teaches that we are to look upon our fellow Chriſtians in this caſe as himſelf, and that our giving or with-holding from them, ſhall be taken, as if we ſo behaved ourſelves towards him; ſee Matth. xxv. 40. There Chriſt ſays to the righteous on his right hand, who had ſupplied the wants of the needy, "In that ye have done it to one "of the leaſt of theſe my brethren, ye have done it unto "me." In like manner he ſays to the wicked who had not ſhown mercy to the poor, verſ 45. "In as much as ye did "it not unto one of the leaſt of theſe, ye did it not to "me."——Now what ſtronger enforcement of this duty can be conceived, or is poſſible, than this, that Jeſus Chriſt looks upon our kind and bountiful, or unkind and uncharitable treatment of our needy neighbours, as ſuch a treatment of himſelf?

If Chriſt himſelf were here upon earth, and dwelt among us in a frail body, as he once did, and were in calamitous and needy circumſtances, ſhould we not be willing to ſupply him? Should we be apt to excuſe ourſelves from helping him? Should we not be willing to ſupply him ſo, that he might live free from diſtreſſing poverty? And if we did otherwiſe, ſhould we not bring great guilt upon ourſelves? And might not our conduct juſtly be very highly reſented by God? Chriſt was once here in a frail

body, ſtood in need of the charity of people, and was maintained by it; Luke viii. 2. 3. "And certain women which "had been healed of evil ſpirits and infirmities, Mary call-"ed Magdalen, out of whom went ſeven devils, and Jo-"anna the wife of Chuza, Herod's ſteward, and Suſanna, "and many others, which miniſtered unto him of their "ſubſtance." So he ſtill, in many of his members, needs the charity of others.

3. Conſider that there is an abſolute neceſſity of our complying with the difficult duties of religion. To give to the poor in the manner and meaſure that the goſpel preſcribes, is a difficult duty, i. e. it is very contrary to corrupt nature, to that covetouſneſs and ſelfiſhneſs of which there is ſo much in the wicked heart of man. Man is naturally governed only by a principle of ſelf-love; and it is a difficult thing to corrupt nature, for men to deny themſelves of their preſent intereſt, truſting in God to make it up to them hereafter.

But how often hath Chriſt told us the neceſſity of doing difficult duties of religion, if we will be his diſciples; that we muſt ſell all, take up our croſs daily, deny ourſelves, renounce our worldly profits and intereſts, &c. And if this duty ſeem hard and difficult to you, let not that be an objection with you againſt doing it; for you have taken up quite a wrong notion of things, if you expect to go to heaven without performing difficult duties; if you expect any other than to find the way to life a narrow way.

4. The ſcripture teaches us that this very particular duty is neceſſary. The ſcripture teaches us this in three ways.

(1) In that the ſcripture teaches, that God will deal with us as we deal with our fellow creatures in this particular, and that with what meaſure we mete to others in this reſpect, God will meaſure to us again. This the ſcripture aſſerts both ways; it aſſerts that if we be of a merciful ſpirit, God will be merciful to us; Matth. v. 7. "Bleſſed are the "merciful, for they ſhall obtain mercy." Pſal. xviii. 25. "With the merciful thou wilt ſhow thyſelf merciful." On the other hand it tells us, that if we be not merciful, God will not be merciful to us, and that all our pretences to faith and a work of converſion will not avail us, to obtain mercy, unleſs we be merciful to them that are in want. James ii. 13. 14. 15. 16. "For he ſhall have judgement with-"out mercy, that hath ſhowed no mercy.—What doth it

"profit,

" profit, my brethren, though a man ſay he hath faith, and " have not works? can faith ſave him? If a brother or " ſiſter be naked, and deſtitute of daily food; and one of " you ſay unto them, Depart in peace, be you warmed, " and filled: notwithſtanding ye give them not thoſe " things which are needful to the body; what doth it pro- " fit?"

(2.) This very thing is often mentioned in ſcripture, as an eſſential part of the character of a godly man; Pſal. xxxvii. 21. " The righteous ſhoweth mercy, and giveth:" and again, in verſ. 26. " He is ever merciful, and lendeth." Pſal. cxii. 5. " A good man ſhoweth favour, and lendeth:" and, in verſ. 9. " He hath diſperſed, and given to the " poor." So, Prov. xiv. 31. " He that honoureth God, " hath mercy on the poor." Again, Prov. xxi. 26; and in Iſai. lvii. 1. A *righteous* man, and a *merciful* man are uſed as ſynonymous terms: " The *righteous* periſheth, and " *merciful* men are taken away," &c.

So it is mentioned in the New Teſtament as a thing ſo eſſential, that the contrary cannot conſiſt with a ſincere love to God. 1 John, iii. 17. 18. 19. " But whoſo hath " this world's goods, and ſeeth his brother have need, and " ſhutteth up his bowels of compaſſion from him, how " dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, " let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed " and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the " truth, and ſhall aſſure our hearts before him." So the Apoſtle Paul, when he writes to the Corinthians, and propoſes their contributing for the ſupply of the poor ſaints, tells them what he doth it for, viz. a trial of their ſincerity: ſee 2 Cor. viii. 8. " I ſpeak to prove the ſincerity of " your love."

(3.) Another thing whereby the ſcripture teacheth us the neceſſity of this duty in order to ſalvation, is that Chriſt teaches, that judgement will be paſt at the great day according to men's works in this reſpect. This is taught us by Chriſt in the account which he gives us of the day of judgement in Matth. xxv. which is the moſt particular account of the proceedings of that day, that we have in the whole Bible; ſee Matth. xxv. 34. &c. It is evident that Chriſt thus repreſented the proceedings and determinations of this great day, as turning upon this one point, on purpoſe, and on deſign to lead us into this notion, and to fix it in us, that a charitable ſpirit and practice towards our brethren is neceſſary to ſalvation.

5. Conſider

5. Conſider what abundant encouragement the word of God gives, that you ſhall be no loſers by your charity and bounty to them that are in want. As we have already obſerved, that there is ſcarce any duty preſcribed in the word of God, which is ſo much inſiſted on as this; ſo there is ſcarce any to which there are ſo many promiſes of reward made as to this duty. We could not deſire more nor greater promiſes. This virtue eſpecially hath the promiſes of this life and that which is to come. If we may believe the ſcriptures, when a man charitably gives to his neighbour in want, it is the giver that has the greateſt advantage by it, greater than the receiver; Acts xx. 35. "I have "ſhowed you all things, how that ſo labouring ye ought "to ſupport the weak, and to remember the words of the "Lord Jeſus, how he ſaid, It is more bleſſed to give than "to receive." He that gives bountifully is an happier man than he that receives bountifully; Prov. xiv. 21. "He "that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he."

Many perſons are ready to look upon what is beſtowed for charitable uſes as loſt. But we ought not ſo to eſteem it: we ought not to look upon it as loſt, becauſe it benefits thoſe to whom it is given, whom we ought to love as ourſelves. And not only ſo, but it is not loſt *to us*, if we can give any credit to the ſcriptures. See the advice that *Solomon* gives in Eccl. xi. 1. "Caſt thy bread upon the wa-"ters, for thou ſhalt find it after many days." By caſting our bread upon the waters, Solomon means giving it to the poor, as appears by the next words, "Give a portion "to ſeven and alſo to eight." Waters are ſometimes put for peoples and multitudes.

What ſtrange advice would this ſeem to many, to caſt their bread upon the waters, which would ſeem to them like throwing it away! What more direct method to loſe our bread, than to go and throw it into the ſea. But the wiſe man tells us, No, it is not loſt; you ſhall find it again after many days. It is not ſunk, but you commit it to Providence; you commit it to the winds and waves: however it will come about to you, and you ſhall find it again after many days. Though it ſhould be many days firſt, yet you ſhall find it at laſt, at a time when you moſt need it. He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord; and God is not one of thoſe who will not pay again what is lent to him. If you lend any thing to God, you commit it into faithful hands. Prov. xix. 17. "He that hath pity on the "poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given

"will

" will he pay him again." God will not only pay you again, but he will pay you with great increaſe; Luke vi. 38, " Give and it ſhall be given you, good meaſure preſſed " down, and ſhaken together, and running over."

Men do not account that loſt, that is let out to uſe: but what is beſtowed in charity is lent to the Lord, and he repays with great increaſe, Iſa. xxxii. 8. " The liberal de- " viſeth liberal things, and by liberal things ſhall he ſtand." Here I would particularly obſerve,

(1.) That if you give what you give with a ſpirit of true charity, you ſhall be rewarded in what is infinitely more valuable than what you give. For parting with a ſmall part of your earthly ſubſtance, you ſhall be rewarded with eternal riches in heaven. Matth. x. 42. " Whoſoever " ſhall give to drink unto one of theſe little ones, a cup of " cold water only, in the name of a diſciple; verily I ſay " unto you, he ſhall in no wiſe loſe his reward."

A giving to our needy brethren is in ſcripture called a laying up treaſure in heaven, in bags that wax not old; Luke xii. 33. " Sell what ye have and give alms, provide " for yourſelves bags that wax not old, a treaſure in the " heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, " nor moth corrupteth." Men when they have laid up their money in their cheſts, do not ſuppoſe that they have thrown it away; but, on the contrary, that it is laid up ſafe. Much leſs is treaſure thrown away, when it is laid up in heaven. What is laid up there is laid up much ſafer than what is laid up in cheſts or cabinets.

You cannot ſo lay up treaſure on earth, but that it may be liable to be ſtolen, or otherwiſe to fail. But there no thief approacheth nor moth corrupteth. It is committed to God's care and he will keep it ſafely for you, and when you die you ſhall receive it with infinite increaſe. For a part of your earthly ſubſtance thus beſtowed, you ſhall receive heavenly riches, on which you may live in the greateſt fulneſs, honour, and happineſs, to all eternity; and ſhall never be in want of any thing. For feeding with ſome of your bread thoſe who cannot recompenſe you, you ſhall be rewarded at the reſurrection, and eat bread in the kingdom of God. Luke xiv. 13.—16. " When thou makeſt a feaſt, " call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind: and " thou ſhalt be bleſſed; for they cannot recompenſe thee: " for thou ſhalt be recompenſed at the reſurrection of the " juſt. And when one of them that ſat at meat with him,

" heard

" heard theſe things, he ſaid unto him, Bleſſed is he that " ſhall eat bread in the kingdom of God."

(2.) If you give to the needy only in the exerciſe of moral virtue, you will not be in the way to loſe by it, but greatly to gain, in your temporal intereſt. They that give in the exerciſe of a gracious charity, are in the way to be gainers both here and hereafter; and thoſe that give in the exerciſe of a moral bounty and liberality, have many temporal promiſes made to them. We learn by the word of God, that they are in the way to be proſpered in their outward affairs. Ordinarily ſuch do not loſe by it, but ſuch a bleſſing attends their concerns, that they are paid doubly for it: Prov. xi. 24. 25. " There is that ſcattereth, and yet " encreaſeth; there is that with-holdeth more than is " meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal ſoul ſhall be " made fat: and he that watereth, ſhall be watered alſo " himſelf." And Prov. xxviii. 27. " He that giveth to the " poor, ſhall not lack."

When men give to the needy, they do as it were ſow ſeed for a crop. When men ſow their ſeed, they ſeem to throw it away; yet they do not look upon it as thrown away; becauſe, though they expect not the ſame again, yet they expect much more as the fruit of it: and if it be not certain that they ſhall have a crop, yet they are willing to run the venture of it; for that is the ordinary way wherein men obtain increaſe. So it is when perſons give to the poor; though the promiſes of gaining thereby, in our outward circumſtances, perhaps are not abſolute; yet it is as much the ordinary conſequence of it, as increaſe is of ſowing ſeed. Giving to the poor, is in this reſpect compared to ſowing ſeed, in Eccl. xi. 6. " In the morning ſow thy ſeed, " and in the evening with-hold not thine hand: for thou " knoweſt not whether ſhall proſper, either this or that, " or whether they both ſhall be alike good." By withholding the hand, the wiſe man means, not giving to the poor; for he was ſpeaking of that in the firſt and ſecond verſes: " Thou knoweſt not whether ſhall proſper, either " this or that, or whether they both ſhall be alike good." This intimates, that giving to the poor is as likely a way to obtain proſperity and increaſe, as ſowing ſeed in a field.

The huſbandman doth not look upon his ſeed, which he ſows in his field, to be loſt, but is glad that he has opportunity to ſow it. It grieves him, not that he has land to be ſowed, but he rejoices in it. For the like reaſon ſhould we not be grieved that we find needy people to beſtow

our

our charity upon; for this is as much an opportunity to obtain increaſe as the other.

Some may think this is ſtrange doctrine; and it is to be feared, that not many will ſo far believe it as to give to the poor with as much chearfulneſs as they ſow their ground. However, it is the very doctrine of the word of God, 2 Cor. ix. 6. 7. 8. "But this I ſay, He which ſoweth ſparingly, ſhall reap alſo ſparingly: and he which ſoweth bountifully, ſhall reap alſo bountifully. Every man according as he purpoſeth in his heart, ſo let him give; not grudgingly, or of neceſſity: for God loveth a chearful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye always having all ſufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

It is eaſy with God to make up to men what they give in charity. Many but little conſider how their proſperity or ill ſucceſs in their outward affairs depends upon Providence. There are a thouſand turns of Providence, to which their affairs are liable, whereby God may either add to their outward ſubſtance, or diminiſh from it, a great deal more than they are ordinarily called to give to their neighbours. How eaſy is it with God to diminiſh what they poſſeſs, by ſickneſs in their families, or by drought, or froſt, or mildew, or vermine, or unfortunate accidents, or by entanglements in their affairs, or diſappointments in their buſineſs! And how eaſy is it with God to increaſe their ſubſtance, by ſuitable ſeaſons, or by health and ſtrength; by giving them fair opportunities for promoting their intereſt in their dealings with men; by conducting them in his providence, ſo that they attain their deſigns; and by innumerable other ways which might be mentioned! How often is it, that only one act of providence in a man's affairs either adds to his eſtate, or diminiſhes from it, more than he would need to give to the poor in a whole year.

God hath told us, that this is the way to have his bleſſing attending our affairs. Thus, in the text, verſ. 10. "Thou ſhalt ſurely give him, and thine heart ſhall not be grieved when thou giveſt unto him; becauſe that for this thing the Lord thy God ſhall bleſs thee in all thy works, and in all that thou putteſt thine hand unto;" and Prov. xxii. 9. "He that hath a bountiful eye, ſhall be bleſſed." It is a remarkable evidence how little many men realiſe the things of religion, whatever they pretend; either how little they realiſe that the ſcripture is the word of God, or if it

be, that he ſpeaks true; that notwithſtanding all the promiſes made in the ſcripture to bounty to the poor, yet they are ſo backward to this duty, and are ſo afraid to truſt God with a little of their eſtates

But obſervation may confirm the ſame thing which the word of God teaches on this head. It may be obſerved, that God, in his providence, generally ſmiles upon and proſpers thoſe men who are of a liberal, charitable, bountiful ſpirit.

I propoſe at another time, if God give opportunity, to offer ſome other motives, and to anſwer ſome objections that are commonly made againſt this duty.

SER.

SERMON XXXI.

The Duty of *Charity* to the Poor, explained and enforced.

DEUT. XV. 7.—12.

If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates, in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou ſhalt not harden thy heart, nor ſhut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou ſhalt open thine hand wide unto him, and ſhalt ſurely lend him ſufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, ſaying, The ſeventh year, the year of releaſe is at hand: and thine eye be evil againſt thy poor brother, and thou giveſt him nought, and he cry unto the Lord againſt thee, and it be ſin unto thee. Thou ſhalt ſurely give him, and thine heart ſhall not be grieved when thou giveſt unto him: becauſe that for this thing the Lord thy God ſhall bleſs thee in all thy works, and in all that thou putteſt thine hand unto. For the poor ſhall never ceaſe out of the land: therefore I command thee, ſaying, Thou ſhalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.

DOCTRINE. IT is the abſolute and indiſpenſable duty of the people of God, to give bountifully and willingly for the ſupply of the wants of the needy.

Having gone through the doctrinal part of the ſubject, I came to the application, and was laſt applying the ſubject in an uſe of exhortation; and have already mentioned ſeve-

ral motives to excite to the practice of this duty. I now proceed to another motive.

6. God hath threatened to follow with his curse those who are uncharitable to the poor; as Prov. xxviii. 27. "He "that giveth to the poor shall not lack; but he that hi- "deth his eyes, shall have many a curse." It is said, *he that hideth his eyes*, because this is the way of uncharitable men; they hide their eyes from seeing the wants of their neighbour. A charitable person, whose heart dispo-ses him to bounty and liberality, will be quick-sighted to discern the needs of others. They will not be at any difficulty to find out who is in want; they will see objects enough of their charity, let them go whither they will.

But, on the contrary, he that is of a niggardly spirit, so that it goes against the grain to give any thing, he will be always at a loss for objects of his charity. Such men excuse themselves with this, that they find not any one to give to. They hide their eyes, and will not see their neighbour's wants. If a particular object is presented, they will not very readily see his circumstances; they are a long while in being convinced that he is an object of charity. They hide their eyes; and it is not an easy thing to make them sensible of the necessities and distresses of their neighbour, or at least to convince them, that his necessities are such that they ought to give him any great matter.

Other men, who are of a bountiful spirit, can very easily see the objects of charity; but the uncharitable are very unapt both to see the proper objects of charity, and to see their obligations to this duty. The reason is, that they are of that sort spoken of here by the wise man, *they hide their eyes*. Men will readily see, where they are willing to see; but where they hate to see, they will hide their eyes.

God says, such an one as hides his eyes in this case shall have many a curse. Such an one is in the way to be cursed in soul and body, in both his spiritual and temporal affairs. We have shown already, how those that are charitable to the poor are in the way of being blessed. There are so many promises of the divine blessing, that we may look upon it as much the way to be blessed in our outward concerns, as sowing seed in a field is the way to have increase. And to be close and uncharitable, is as much the way to be followed with a curse, as to be charitable is the way to be followed with a blessing. To with-hold more than is meet, tends as much to poverty, as scattering tends to increase,

Prov.

Prov. xi. 24. Therefore, if you with-hold more than is meet, you will croſs your own diſpoſition, and will fruſtrate your own end. What you ſeek by with-holding from your neighbour, is your own temporal intereſt and outward eſtate; but if you be not atheiſtical, ſo as not to believe the ſcriptures to be the word of God, you muſt believe that you cannot take a more direct courſe to loſe, to be croſſed and curſed in your temporal intereſt, than this of with-holding from your indigent neighbour.

7. Conſider, that you know not what calamitous and neceſſitous circumſtances you yourſelves or your children may be in. Perhaps you are ready to bleſs yourſelves in your hearts, as though there were no danger of your being brought into calamitous and diſtreſſing circumſtances. There is at preſent no proſpect of it; and you hope you ſhall be able to provide well for your children. But you little conſider what a ſhifting, changing, uncertain world you live in, and how often it hath ſo happened, that men have been reduced from the greateſt proſperity to the greateſt adverſity, and how often the children of the rich have been reduced to pinching want.

Agreeable to this is the advice that the wiſe man gives us, Eccleſ. xi. 1. 2. "Caſt thy bread upon the waters; for thou "ſhalt find it after many days. Give a portion to ſeven, "and alſo to eight; for thou knoweſt not what evil ſhall be "upon the earth." Thou knoweſt not what calamitous circumſtances thou mayeſt be in thyſelf, here on this earth, in this changeable uncertain world. You know not what circumſtances you or your children may be brought into by captivity, or other unthought of providences. Providence governs all things. Perhaps you may truſt to your own wiſdom to continue your proſperity; but you cannot alter what God determines and orders in providence, as in the words immediately following the fore-mentioned text in Eccleſiaſtes, "If the clouds be full of rain, they empty them-"ſelves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the "ſouth, or toward the north; in the place where the tree "falleth, there it ſhall be;" i. e. you cannot alter the determinations of Providence. You may truſt to your own wiſdom for future proſperity; but if God have ordained adverſity, it *ſhall come*. Likeas, when the clouds are full of rain, they empty themſelves upon the earth; ſo what is in the womb of Providence ſhall ſurely come to paſs. And as Providence caſts the tree, whether towards the ſouth, or towards the north, whether for proſperity or adverſity, there

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it ſhall be, for all that you can do to alter it; agreeably to what the wiſe man obſerves in chap. vii. 13. "Conſider the "work of God: for who can make that ſtraight which he "hath made crooked?"

This conſideration, that you know not what calamity and neceſſity you may be in yourſelves or your children, tends very powerfully to enforce this duty ſeveral ways.

(1.) This may put you upon conſidering how your hearts would be affected, if it ſhould ſo be. If it ſhould happen, that you or ſome of your children ſhould be brought into ſuch circumſtances, as theſe and thoſe of your neighbours are in, how grievous would it be to you! Now perhaps you ſay of this and the other poor neighbour, that they can do well enough: if they be pinched a little, they can live. Thus you can make light of their difficulties. But if Providence ſhould ſo order it, that you or your children ſhould be brought into the ſame circumſtances, would you make light of them then? Would you not uſe another ſort of language about it? Would you not think that your caſe was ſuch as needed the kindneſs of your neighbours? Would you not think that they ought to be ready to help you? And would you not take it hardly, if you ſaw a contrary ſpirit in them, and ſaw that they made light of your difficulties?

If one of your children ſhould be brought to poverty by captivity *, or otherwiſe, how would your hearts be affected in ſuch a caſe? If you ſhould hear that ſome perſons had taken pity on your child, and had been very bountiful to it, would you not think that they did very well in ſo doing? Would you be at all apt to accuſe them of folly and laviſhneſs or profuſeneſs, that they ſhould give ſo much to it?

(2.) If ever there ſhould be ſuch a time, your kindneſs to others now, will be but a laying up againſt ſuch a time. If you yourſelves ſhould be brought into calamity and neceſſity, then would you find what you have given in charity to others, lying ready in ſtore for you. Caſt thy bread upon the waters, and thou ſhalt find it after many days, ſays the wiſe man. But when ſhall we find it? He tells

* The author repeatedly brings in this idea, doubtleſs becauſe *Northampton*, the place where theſe Sermons were preached, was at that time a frontier-town, and ſuffered much by the incurſions of the Indians from Canada, who ſlaughtered and captivated the people, as they found opportunity.

us in the next verſe; "Give a portion to ſeven, and alſo "to eight; for thou knoweſt not what evil ſhall be upon "the earth." Then is the time when you ſhall find it, when the day of evil cometh. You ſhall again find your bread which you have caſt upon the waters, when you ſhall want it moſt, and ſtand in greateſt neceſſity of it: God will keep it for you againſt ſuch a time. When other bread ſhall fail, then God will bring to you the bread which you formerly caſt upon the waters; ſo that you ſhall not famiſh. He that giveth to the poor ſhall not lack.

Giving to the needy is like laying up againſt winter, or againſt a time of calamity. It is the beſt way of laying up for yourſelves and for your children. Children in a time of need very often find their father's bread, that bread which their fathers had caſt upon the waters. Pſal. xxxvii. 25. "I have been young and now am old, yet have I not "ſeen the righteous forſaken, nor his ſeed begging bread:" Why? what is the reaſon of it? It follows in the next verſe, "He is ever merciful and lendeth, and his ſeed is "bleſſed."

Whether the time will ever come or not, that we or our children ſhall be in pinching and diſtreſſing want of bread; yet doubtleſs evil will be on the earth. We ſhall have our times of calamity, wherein we ſhall ſtand in great need of God's pity and help, if not of that of our fellow-creatures. And God hath promiſed that at ſuch a time, he that hath been of a charitable ſpirit and practice, ſhall find help, Pſal. xli. 1.—4. "Bleſſed is he that conſidereth the poor; "the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord "will preſerve him, and keep him alive, and he ſhall be "bleſſed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him "into the will of his enemies. The Lord will ſtrengthen "him upon the bed of languiſhing: thou wilt make all his "bed in his ſickneſs." Such as have been merciful and liberal to others in their diſtreſs, God will not forget it, but will ſo order it, that they ſhall have help when they are in diſtreſs. Yea their children ſhall reap the fruit of it in the day of trouble.

(3.) God hath threatened uncharitable perſons, that if ever they come to be in calamity and diſtreſs they ſhall be left helpleſs; Prov. xxi. 13. "Whoſo ſtoppeth his ears "at the cry of the poor, he ſhall cry himſelf and not be "heard."

I proceed now to anſwer ſome objections, which are ſometimes made againſt this duty.

Object. 1. I am in a natural condition, and if I ſhould give conſiderable to the poor, I ſhould not do it with a right ſpirit, and ſo ſhould get nothing by it.

Anſ. 1. We have ſhown already that a temporal bleſſing is promiſed to a moral bounty and liberality. This is the way to be proſpered; this is the way to increaſe. We find in ſcripture many promiſes of temporal bleſſings to moral virtues; as to diligence in our buſineſs, to juſtice in our dealings, to faithfulneſs, to temperance. So there are many bleſſings promiſed to bounty and liberality.

2. You may as well make the ſame objection againſt any other duty of religion. You may as well object againſt keeping the Sabbath, againſt prayer, or public worſhip, or againſt doing any thing at all in religion: for while in a natural condition, you do not any of theſe duties with a right ſpirit. If you ſay, you do theſe duties becauſe God hath commanded or required them of you, and you ſhall ſin greatly if you neglect them; you ſhall increaſe your guilt; and ſo expoſe yourſelves to the greater damnation and puniſhment. The ſame may be ſaid of the neglect of this duty, as of thoſe; the neglect of it is as provoking to God.

If you ſay that you read, and pray, and attend public worſhip, becauſe that is the appointed way for you to ſeek ſalvation; ſo is bounty to the poor, as much as thoſe. The appointed way for us to ſeek the favour of God and eternal life, is the way of the performance of all known duties, of which giving to the poor is one as much known, and as neceſſary as reading the ſcriptures, praying, or any other. Showing mercy to the poor does as much belong to the appointed way of ſeeking ſalvation, as any other duty whatever. Therefore this is the way in which Daniel directed Nebuchadnezzar to ſeek mercy, in Dan. iv. 27. "Wherefore, O King, let my counſel be acceptable to thee, and break off thy ſins by righteouſneſs, and thine iniquities by *ſhowing mercy to the poor.*"

Objec. 2. If I be liberal and bountiful, I ſhall only make a righteouſneſs of it, and ſo it will do me more hurt than good. To this I ſay,

1. The ſame anſwer may be made to this, as to the former objection, viz. That you may as well make the ſame objection againſt doing any religious or moral duty at all. If this be a ſufficient objection againſt deeds of charity, then

then it is a ſufficient objection to prayer; for nothing is more common than for perſons to make a righteouſneſs of their prayers. So it is a good objection againſt your keeping the Sabbath, or attending any public worſhip, or ever reading in the Bible; for of all theſe things you are in danger of making a righteouſneſs. Yea if the objection be good againſt deeds of charity, then it is as good againſt acts of juſtice; and you may neglect to ſpeak the truth, may neglect to pay your debts, may neglect acts of common humanity; for of all thoſe things you are in danger of making a righteouſneſs.

So that if your objection be good, you may throw up all religion, and live like heathens or atheiſts; and may be thieves, robbers, fornicators, adulterers, murderers, and commit all the ſins that you can think of, leſt if you ſhould do otherwiſe, you ſhould make a righteouſneſs of your conduct.

2. Your objection carries it thus, that it is not beſt for you to do as God commands and counſels you to do. We find many commands in ſcripture to be charitable to the poor: the Bible is full of them, and you are not excepted from thoſe commands. God makes no exception of any particular kinds of perſons that are eſpecially in danger of making a righteouſneſs of what they do; and God often directs and counſels perſons to this duty. Now will you preſume to ſay that God has not directed you to the beſt way? He has adviſed you to do thus; but you think it not beſt for you, but that it would do you more hurt than good, if you ſhould do it. You think there is other counſel better than God's, and that it is the beſt way for you to go contrary to God's commands.

Object. 3. I have in times paſt given to the poor and never found myſelf the better for it. I have heard miniſters preach, that giving to the poor was the way to be bleſſed and proſpered; but I perceive not that I am more proſpered than I was before. Yea, I have met with many misfortunes, croſſes, and diſappointments in my affairs ſince. And it may be that ſome will ſay, That very year, or ſoon after the very time I had been giving to the poor, hoping to be bleſſed for it, I met with great loſſes, and things went hardly with me; and therefore I do not find what I hear preached about giving to the poor, as being the way to be bleſſed and proſpered, agreeable to my experience.

To this objection I ſhall anſwer ſeveral things.

1. Perhaps you looked out for the fulfilment of the promiſe too ſoon, before you had fulfilled the condition; as particularly, perhaps you have been ſo ſparing and grudging in your kindneſs to the poor, that what you have done has been rather a diſcovery of a covetous, niggardly ſpirit, than of any bounty or liberality. The promiſes are not made to every man who gives any thing at all to the poor, let it be ever ſo little and after what manner ſoever given. You miſtook the promiſes, if you underſtood them ſo. A man may give ſomething to the poor, and yet be entitled to no promiſe, either temporal or ſpiritual. The promiſes are made to mercy and liberality. To theſe the promiſes are made in the text, and every where throughout the Bible.

But a man may give ſomething, and yet be ſo niggardly and grudging in it, that what he gives may be as the apoſtle calls it, a matter of covetouſneſs. What he does may be more a manifeſtation of his covetouſneſs and cloſeneſs, than any thing elſe. But there are no promiſes made to men's expreſſing their covetouſneſs.

Perhaps what you gave was not freely given, but as it were of neceſſity. It was grudgingly; your hearts were grieved when you gave. And if you gave once or twice what was conſiderable, yet that doth not anſwer the rule. It may be for all that, that in the general courſe of your lives you have been far from being kind and liberal to your neighbours. Perhaps you thought that becauſe you once or twice gave a few ſhillings to the poor, that then you ſtood entitled to the promiſes of being bleſſed in all your concerns, and of increaſing and being eſtabliſhed by liberal things; though in the general you have lived in a faulty neglect of the duty of charity.

You raiſe objections from experience, before you have made any trial. To give once, or twice, or thrice, is not to make trial, though you give conſiderably. You cannot make any trial, unleſs you become a liberal perſon, or unleſs you become ſuch that you may be truly ſaid to be of a liberal and bountiful practice. Let one that is truly ſuch an one, and has been ſuch in the general courſe of his life, tell what he hath found by experience.

2. If you have been liberal to the poor, and have met with calamities ſince, yet how can you tell how much greater calamities and loſſes you might have met with, if you had been

been otherwiſe? You ſay you have met with croſſes, and diſappointments, and frowns. If you expected to meet with no trouble in the world, becauſe you gave to the poor, you miſtook the matter. Though there be many and great promiſes made to the liberal, yet God hath no where promiſed, that they ſhall not find this world a world of trouble. It will be ſo to all. Man is born to ſorrow, and muſt expect no other than to meet with ſorrow here. But how can you tell how much greater ſorrow you would have met with, if you had been cloſe and unmerciful to the poor? how can you tell how much greater loſſes you would have met with? how much more vexation and trouble would have followed you? Have none ever met with greater frowns in their outward affairs, than you have?

3. How can you tell what bleſſings God hath yet in reſerve for you, if you do but continue in well-doing? Although God hath promiſed great bleſſings to liberality to the poor, yet he hath not limited himſelf as to the time of the beſtowment. If you have not yet ſeen any evident fruit of your kindneſs to the poor, yet the time may come when you ſhall ſee it remarkably, and that at a time when you moſt ſtand in need of it. You caſt your bread upon the waters, and looked for it, and expected to find it again preſently. And ſometimes it is ſo; but this is not promiſed: it is promiſed, "Thou ſhalt find it again *after many days*." God knows how to chuſe a time for you, better than you yourſelves. You ſhould therefore wait his time. If you go on in well-doing, God may bring it to you when you ſtand moſt in need.

It may be that there is ſome winter a-coming, ſome day of trouble; and God keeps your bread for you againſt that time; and then God will give you good meaſure, and preſſed down, and ſhaken together, and running over. We muſt truſt in God's word for the beſtowment of the promiſed reward, whether we can ſee in what manner it is done or no. Pertinent to the preſent purpoſe are thoſe words of the wiſe man in Eccleſ. xi. 4. "He that obſerveth the winds "ſhall not ſow; and he that regardeth the clouds ſhall not "reap." In this context the wiſe man is ſpeaking of charity to the poor, and comparing it to ſowing ſeed; and adviſes us to truſt Providence for ſucceſs in that, as we do in ſowing ſeed. He that regardeth the winds and clouds, to prognoſticate thence proſperity to ſeed, and will not truſt Providence with it, is not like to ſow, nor to have bread-corn. So he that will not truſt Providence for the

reward of his charity to the poor, is like to go without the bleſſing. After the words now quoted, follows his advice, in verſ. 6. "In the morning ſow thy ſeed, and in the even-"ing with hold not thine hand; for thou knoweſt not whe-"ther ſhall proſper, either this or that, or whether they "both ſhall be alike good."

I conclude with the advice of the apoſtle, Gal. vi. 9. "And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due ſea-"ſon we ſhall reap, if we faint not." You think you have not reaped yet. Whether you have or not, go on ſtill in giving and doing good; and if you do ſo, you ſhall reap in due time. God only knows the due time, the beſt time, for you to reap.

SER-

SERMON XXXII.

The Duty of *Charity* to the Poor, explained and enforced.

DEUT. xv. 7.—12.

If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates, in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou ſhalt not harden thy heart, nor ſhut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou ſhalt open thine hand wide unto him, and ſhalt ſurely lend him ſufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, ſaying, The ſeventh year, the year of releaſe is at hand: and thine eye be evil againſt thy poor brother, and thou giveſt him nought, and he cry unto the Lord againſt thee, and it be ſin unto thee. Thou ſhalt ſurely give him, and thine heart ſhall not be grieved when thou giveſt unto him: becauſe that for this thing the Lord thy God ſhall bleſs thee in all thy works, and in all that thou putteſt thine hand unto. For the poor ſhall never ceaſe out of the land: therefore I command thee, ſaying, Thou ſhalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.

DOCTRINE. IT is a moſt abſolute and indiſpenſable duty of a people of God, bountifully and willingly to ſupply the wants of the needy.

Having ſpoken upon this doctrine under ſeveral propoſitions, I came to the improvement; and, after applying it in the uſes of examination and exhortation, I was left anſwering

ſwering ſeveral objections which are commonly made to this duty. Three of theſe objections I have already anſwered; and now proceed to

OBJECT. 4. Some may object againſt charity to ſuch or ſuch particular perſons, that they are not obliged to give them any thing; for though they be needy, yet they are not in extremity. It is true they meet with difficulty, yet not ſo but that they can live, though they ſuffer ſome hardſhips.

ANS. It doth not anſwer rules of Chriſtian charity, to relieve thoſe only who are reduced to extremity, as might be abundantly ſhown. I ſhall at this time mention but two things as evidences of it.

1. We are commanded to love and treat one another as brethren: 1 Pet. iii. 8. "Have compaſſion one of another; "love as brethren; be pitiful." Now, is it the part of brethren to refuſe to help one another, and to do any thing for each other's comfort, and for the relief of each other's difficulties, only when they are in extremity? Doth it not become brothers and ſiſters to have a more friendly diſpoſition one towards another, than this comes to? and to be ready to compaſſionate one another under difficulties, tho' they be not extreme?

The rule of the goſpel is, that when we ſee our brother under any difficulty or burden, we ſhould be ready to bear the burden with him: Gal. vi. 2. "Bear ye one another's "burdens, and ſo fulfil the law of Chriſt." So we are commanded, *by love to ſerve one another*, Gal. v. 13. The Chriſtian ſpirit will make us apt to ſympathiſe with our neighbour, when we ſee him under any difficulty: Rom. xii. 15. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with "them that weep." When our neighbour is in difficulty, he is afflicted; and we ought to have ſuch a ſpirit of love to him, as to be afflicted with him in his affliction. And if we ought to be afflicted with him, then it will follow, that we ought to be ready to relieve him; becauſe, if we are afflicted with him, in relieving him we relieve ourſelves. His relief is ſo far our own relief, as his affliction is our affliction. Chriſtianity teaches us to be afflicted in our neighbour's affliction; and nature teaches us to relieve ourſelves when afflicted.

We ſhould behave ourſelves one towards another as brethren that are fellow-travellers; for we are pilgrims and ſtrangers here on earth, and are on a journey. Now, if brethren

brethren be on a journey together, and one meet with difficulty in the way, doth it not become the reſt to help him, not only in the extremity of broken bones, or the like, but if his proviſion for the journey fall ſhort, it becomes his fellow-travellers to afford him a ſupply out of their ſtores, and not to be over nice, exact, and fearful leſt they give him too much: for it is but proviſion for a journey; and it makes no odds when they get to their journey's end.

2. That we ſhould relieve our neighbour only when in extremity, is not agreeable to the rule of loving our neighbour as ourſelves. That rule implies that our love towards our neigbour ſhould work in the ſame manner, and expreſs itſelf in the ſame ways, as our love towards ourſelves. We are very ſenſible of our own difficulties; we ſhould alſo be readily ſenſible of theirs. From love to ourſelves, when we are under difficulties, and ſuffer hardſhips, we are concerned for our relief, are wont to ſeek relief, and lay ourſelves out for it. And as we would love our neighbour as ourſelves, we ought in like manner to be concerned when our neighbour is under difficulty, and to ſeek his relief.

We are wont to be much concerned about our own difficulties, though we be not reduced to extremity, and are willing in thoſe caſes to lay ourſelves out for our own relief. So, as we would love our neighbour as ourſelves, we ſhould in like manner lay out ourſelves to obtain relief for him, though his difficulties be not extreme.

Object. 5. Some may object againſt charity to a particular object, that he is an ill ſort of perſon; that he deſerves not that people ſhould be kind to him; that he is of a very ill temper, of an ungrateful ſpirit, and is an ill ſort of man on other accounts; and particularly that he hath not deſerved well of *them*, but has treated them ill, has been injurious to them, and even now entertains an ill ſpirit againſt them.

Ans. We are obliged to relieve perſons in want, notwithſtanding theſe things; we are obliged ſo to do both by the general and particular rules of God's word.

1. We are obliged to do ſo by the general rules of ſcripture. I ſhall mention two.

(1.) That of loving our neighbour as ourſelves. A man may be our neighbour, though he be an ill ſort of man, and our enemy, as Chriſt himſelf teaches us by his diſcourſe with the lawyer, Luke x. 25. &c. A certain lawyer came to Chriſt, and aſked him, What he ſhould do to inherit eternal

ternal life? Chriſt aſked him, How it was written in the law? He anſwers, "Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God "with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy "ſtrength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as "thyſelf." Chriſt tells him, if he ſhall do thus, he ſhall live. But then the lawyer aſks him, who is his neighbour? becauſe it was a received doctrine among the Phariſees, that no man was their neighbour, but their friends, and thoſe of the ſame people and religion. Chriſt anſwers him by a parable, or ſtory of a certain man, who went down from Jeruſalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who ſtripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed from him, leaving him half-dead. Soon after there came a prieſt that way, who ſaw the poor man that had been thus cruelly treated by the thieves; but paſſed by without affording him any relief. The ſame was done by a Levite. But a certain Samaritan coming that way, as ſoon as he ſaw the half-dead man, had compaſſion on him, took him up, bound up his wounds, ſet him on his own beaſt, carried him to the inn, and took care of him, paying the innkeeper money for his paſt and future expence; and promiſing him ſtill more, if he ſhould find it neceſſary to be at more expence on behalf of the man.

Then Chriſt aſks the lawyer, which of theſe three, the prieſt, the Levite, or the Samaritan, was neighbour to the man that fell among the thieves. Chriſt propoſed this in ſuch a manner, that the lawyer could not help owning, that the Samaritan did well in relieving the Jew, that he did the duty of a neighbour to him. Now, there was an inveterate enmity between the Jews and the Samaritans. They hated one another more than any other nation in the world; and the Samaritans were a people exceedingly troubleſome to the Jews; yet we ſee that Chriſt teaches, that the Jews ought to do the part of neighbours to the Samaritans; i. e. to love them as themſelves; for it was that of which Chriſt was ſpeaking.

And the conſequence was plain. If the Samaritan was neighbour to the diſtreſſed Jew, then the Jews, by a parity of reaſon, were neighbours to the Samaritans. If the Samaritan did well, did as he ought to do, in relieving a Jew that was his enemy, then the Jews would do well, and as they ought to do, in relieving the Samaritans, their enemies.

What I particularly obſerve is, that Chriſt here plainly teaches, that our enemies, thoſe that abuſe and injure us, are

are our neighbours, and therefore come under the rule o loving our neighbour as ourſelves.

(2.) Another general rule that obliges us to the ſame thing, is that wherein we are commanded to love one another, as Chriſt hath loved us. We have it John xiii. 34. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one "another; as I have loved you, that ye alſo love one an- "other." Chriſt calls it a new commandment, with reſpect to that old commandment of the law, of loving our neighbour as ourſelves. This, of loving our neighbour as Chriſt hath loved us, implies ſomething further in it than that; and it is with reſpect to that a new commandment, as it opens our duty to us in a new manner, and in a further degree than that did. We muſt not only love our neighbour as ourſelves, but as Chriſt hath loved us. We have the ſame again, John xv. 12. "This is my commandment, "that ye love one another, as I have loved you."

Now, the meaning of this is, not that we ſhould love one another to the ſame degree that Chriſt loved us; though there ought to be a proportion, conſidering our nature and capacity; but that we ſhould exerciſe our love one to another in like manner. As for inſtance, Chriſt hath loved us ſo as to be willing to deny himſelf, and to ſuffer greatly, in order to help us; ſo ſhould we be willing to deny ourſelves, in order to help one another. Chriſt loved us, and ſhowed us great kindneſs, though we were far below him; ſo ſhould we ſhow kindneſs to thoſe of our fellow-men who are far below us. Chriſt denied himſelf to help us, though we are not able to recompenſe him; ſo ſhould we be willing to lay out ourſelves to help our neighbour, freely, expecting nothing again. Chriſt loved us, was kind to us, and was willing to relieve us, though we were very evil and hateful, of an evil diſpoſition, not deſerving any good, but deſerving only to be hated, and treated with indignation; ſo we ſhould be willing to be kind to thoſe who are an ill ſort of perſons, of an hateful diſpoſition, and are very undeſerving. Chriſt loved us, and laid himſelf out to relieve us, though we were his enemies, hated him, had an ill ſpirit towards him, and had treated him ill; ſo we, as we would love one another as Chriſt hath loved us, ſhould relieve thoſe who are our enemies, hate us, have an ill ſpirit towards us, and have treated us ill.

2. We are obliged to this duty by many *particular* rules. We are particularly required to be kind to the unthankful and to the evil; and therein to follow the example of our

heavenly Father, who cauſes his ſun to riſe on the evil and on the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt. We are obliged, not only to be kind to them that are ſo to us, but to them that hate, and that deſpitefully uſe us. I need not mention the particular places which ſpeak to this effect.

Not but that when perſons are virtuous and pious, and of a grateful diſpoſition, and are friendly diſpoſed towards us, they are more the objects of our charity for it, and our obligation to kindneſs to them is the greater. Yet if things be otherwiſe, that doth not render them not fit objects of our charity, nor ſet us free from obligation to kindneſs towards them.

OBJECT. 6. Some may object from their own circumſtances, that they have nothing to ſpare; they have not more than enough for themſelves.

ANS. 1. It muſt doubtleſs be allowed to be ſo in ſome caſes, that perſons, by reaſon of their own circumſtances, are not obliged to give to others: As for inſtance, if there be a contribution for the poor, they are not obliged to join in the contribution, who are as poor, and in as much need as thoſe are for whom the contribution is made. It ſavours of ridiculous pride and vanity in them to contribute with others, to give to thoſe that are not more needy than they. It ſavours of a proud deſire to conceal their own circumſtances, and an affectation of having them accounted above what they in truth are.

2. There are ſcarcely any who may not make this objection, as they mean by it. There is no perſon who may not ſay, he has not more than enough for himſelf, as he may mean by *enough*. He may mean, that he has not more than he deſires, or more than he can diſpoſe of to his own advantage; or not ſo much, but that, if he had any thing leſs, he ſhould look upon himſelf in worſe circumſtances than he is in now. He will own, that he could live if he had leſs; but then he will ſay he could not live ſo well. Rich men may ſay, they have not more than enough for themſelves, as they may mean by it. They need it all, they may ſay, to ſupport their honour and dignity, as is proper for the place and degree in which they ſtand. Thoſe who are poor, to be ſure, will ſay, *they* have not too much for themſelves; thoſe who are of the middle ſort will ſay, *they* have not too much for themſelves; and the rich will ſay, *they* have not too much for themſelves. Thus there will be none found to give to the poor.

3. In

3. In many caſes, we may, by the rules of the goſpel, be obliged to give to others, when we cannot do it without ſuffering ourſelves; as, if our neighbour's difficulties and neceſſities be much greater than our own, and we ſee that he is not like to be otherwiſe relieved, we ſhould be willing to ſuffer with him, and to take part of his burden on ourſelves; elſe how is that rule of *bearing one another's burdens* fulfilled? If we be never obliged to relieve other's burdens, but when we can do it without burdening ourſelves, then how do we bear our neighbour's burdens, when we bear no burden at all? Though we may not have a ſuperfluity, yet the caſe may be ſo, that we may be obliged to afford relief to others who are in much greater neceſſity; as appears by that rule, Luke iii. 11. "He that hath two coats, "let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath "meat, let him do likewiſe."

Yea, the caſe may be ſo, that they who are very poor may be obliged to give for the relief of others in much greater diſtreſs than they. If there be no other way of relief, thoſe who have the lighteſt burden are obliged ſtill to take ſome part of their neighbour's burden, to make it the more ſupportable. A brother may be obliged to help a brother in extremity, though they are both very much in want. The apoſtle commends the Macedonian Chriſtians, that they were liberal to their brethren, though they themſelves were in deep poverty: 2 Cor. viii. 1. 2. "Moreover, brethren, "we do you to wit of the grace of God beſtowed on the "churches of Macedonia: how in a great trial of affliction, "the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty, a-"bounded unto the riches of their liberality."

4. Thoſe who have not too much for themſelves are willing to ſpare ſeed to ſow, that they may have fruit hereafter. Perhaps they need that which they ſcatter in the field, and ſeem to throw away. They may need it for bread for their families; yet they will ſpare ſeed to ſow, that they may provide for the future, and may have increaſe. But we have already ſhown, that giving to the poor is in ſcripture compared to ſowing ſeed, and is as much the way to increaſe as the ſowing of ſeed is. It doth not tend to poverty, but the contrary; it is not the way to diminiſh our ſubſtance, but to increaſe it. All the difficulty in this matter is in truſting God with what we give, in truſting his promiſes. If men could but truſt the faithfulneſs of God to his own promiſes, they would give freely.

OBJECT. 7. Some may object concerning a particular perſon, that they do not certainly know whether he be an object of charity or not. They are not perfectly acquainted with his circumſtances; neither do they know what ſort of man he is. They know not whether he be in want as he pretends. Or if they know this, they know not how he came to be in want; whether it were not by his own idleneſs, or prodigality. Thus they argue that they cannot be obliged, till they certainly know theſe things.

ANS. 1. This is Nabal's objection, for which he is greatly condemned in ſcripture; ſee 1 Sam. ch. 25. David in his exiled ſtate came and begged relief of Nabal. Nabal objected, as in verſ. 10. 11. "Who is David? And who "is the ſon of Jeſſe? There be many ſervants now-a-"days, that break away every man from his maſter. Shall "I then take my bread and my water, and my fleſh that I "have killed for my ſhearers, and give it unto men, "whom I know not whence they be." His objection was, that David was ſtranger to him; he did not know who he was, nor what his circumſtances were. He did not know but that he was a runaway: and he was not obliged to ſupport and harbour a runaway. He objected, that he knew not that he was a proper object of charity; that he knew not but that he was very much the contrary.

But Abigail no way countenanced his behaviour herein, but greatly condemned it. She calls him a man of Belial, and ſays that he was as his name was; Nabal was his name, and folly was with him. And her behaviour was very contrary to his; and ſhe is greatly commended for it. The Holy Ghoſt tells us in that chapter, in verſ. 3. That *ſhe was a woman of a good underſtanding*. At the ſame time God exceedingly frowned on Nabal's behaviour on this occaſion, as we are informed, that about ten days after God ſmote Nabal that he died, verſ. 38.

This ſtory is doubtleſs told us partly for this end, to diſcountenance a too great ſcrupulouſneſs as to the object on whom we beſtow our charity, and the making of this merely an objection againſt charity to others, that we do not certainly know their circumſtances. It is true, when we have opportunity to become certainly acquainted with their circumſtances, it is well to embrace it: and to be influenced in a meaſure by probability in ſuch caſes, is not to be condemned. Yet it is better to give to ſeveral that are not objects of charity, than to ſend away empty one that is.

2. We

2. We are commanded to be kind to ſtrangers whom we know not, nor their circumſtances. This is commanded in many places; but I ſhall mention but one at this time; and that is that in Heb. xiii. 2. "Be not forgetful to entertain ſtrangers; for thereby ſome have entertained angels unawares." By ſtrangers here the Apoſtle means one whom we know not, and whoſe circumſtances we know not; as is evident by theſe words, "for thereby ſome have entertained angels unawares." Thoſe who entertained angels unawares, did not know the perſons whom they entertained, nor their circumſtances: elſe how could it be unawares?

OBJECT. 8. Some may ſay they are not obliged to give to the poor, till they aſk. If any man is in neceſſity, let him come and make known his ſtraits to me, and then it will be time enough for me to give him. Or if he need a public contribution, let him come and aſk. I do not know that the congregation or church is obliged to relieve till they aſk relief.

ANS. 1. It ſurely is the moſt charitable, to relieve the needy in that way wherein we ſhall do them the greateſt kindneſs. Now it is certain that we ſhall do them a greater kindneſs by inquiring into their circumſtances, and relieving them, without putting them upon begging. There is none of us all but who, if it were their caſe, would look upon it ſo. We ſhould look upon it more kind in our neighbours, to inquire into our circumſtances, and help us of their own accord. To put our neighbours upon begging in order to relief, is, as the times are, a real difficulty, and we ſhould, any of us, eſteem it ſo. It is more charitable, more brotherly, more becoming Chriſtians and the diſciples of Jeſus, to do it without. I think this is ſelf-evident, and needs no proof.

2. This is not agreeable to the character of the liberal man given in ſcripture; viz. that deviſes liberal things. Iſa. xxxii. 8. It is not to deviſe liberal things, to neglect all liberality till the poor come a begging to us. But to inquire and to contrive to find out who ſtand in need of our charity, and to contrive to relieve them in the way that ſhall do them the greateſt kindneſs; that is to deviſe liberal things.

3. We ſhould not commend a man for doing ſo to his own brother. If a man had an own brother or ſiſter in great ſtraits, and he were well able to ſupply them, under the

the pretence, that if he or ſhe want any thing, let them come and aſk and I will give them; we ſhould hardly think ſuch an one behaved like a brother. But as I have obſerved already, Chriſtians are commanded to love as brethren, to look upon one another as brethren in Chriſt, and to treat one another as ſuch.

4. We ſhould commend others for taking the method contrary to that which is propoſed by the objector. If we ſhould hear or read of a people that were ſo charitable, and took ſuch care of the poor, and were ſo concerned that none among them ſhould ſuffer, who were proper objects of charity; that they were wont diligently to inquire into the circumſtances of their neighbours, to find out who were needy, and liberally ſupplied them of their own accord; I ſay, if we ſhould hear or read of ſuch a people, would it not appear well to us? Should not we have the better thought of that people, on that account?

OBJECT. 9. He has brought himſelf to want by his own fault.

ANS. It muſt be conſidered what you mean by his fault.

1. If you mean a want of a natural faculty to manage affairs to advantage, that is to be conſidered as his calamity. Such a faculty is a gift that God beſtows on ſome, and not on others; and it is not owing to themſelves. You ought to be thankful that God hath given you ſuch a gift, which he hath denied to the perſon in queſtion. And it will be a very ſuitable way for you to ſhow your thankfulneſs, to help thoſe to whom that gift is denied, and let them ſhare the benefit of it with you. This is as reaſonable as that he to whom Providence has imparted ſight, ſhould be willing to help him to whom ſight is denied, and that he ſhould have the benefit of the ſight of others, who has none of his own: or, as that he to whom God hath given wiſdom ſhould be willing that the ignorant ſhould have the benefit of his knowledge: or, as that he who has ſound feet ſhould be willing to lead the lame.

2. If they have been reduced to want by ſome overſight, and are to be blamed that they did not conſider for themſelves better; yet that doth not free us from all obligation to charity towards them. If we ſhould for ever refuſe to help men becauſe of that, that would be for us to make their inconſiderateneſs and imprudent act, an unpardonable

unpardonable crime, quite contrarily to the rules of the goſpel, which inſiſt ſo much upon forgiveneſs.

We ſhould not be diſpoſed ſo highly to reſent ſuch an overſight in any for whom we have a dear affection, as our children, or our friends. We ſhould not refuſe to help them in that neceſſity and diſtreſs, which they brought upon themſelves by their own inconſiderateneſs. But we ought to have a dear affection and concern for the welfare of all our fellow Chriſtians, whom we ſhould love as brethren, and as Chriſt hath loved us.

3. If they are come to want by a vicious idleneſs and prodigality; yet we are not thereby excuſed from all obligation to relieve them, unleſs they continue in thoſe vices. If they continue not in thoſe vices, the rules of the goſpel direct us to forgive them; and if their fault be forgiven, then it will not remain to be a bar in the way of our charitably relieving them. If we do otherwiſe, we ſhall act in a manner very contrary to the rule of *loving one another as Chriſt hath loved us.* Now Chriſt hath loved us, pitied us, and greatly laid out himſelf to relieve us from that want and miſery which we brought on ourſelves by our own folly and wickedneſs. We fooliſhly and perverſely threw away thoſe riches with which we were provided, upon which we might have lived and been happy to all eternity.

4. If they continue in the ſame courſes ſtill, yet that doth not excuſe us from charity to their families that are innocent. If we cannot relieve thoſe of their families without their having ſomething of it; yet that ought not to be a bar in the way of our charity; and that becauſe it is ſuppoſed that thoſe of their families are proper objects of charity; and thoſe that are ſo, we are bound to relieve: the command is poſitive and abſolute. If we look upon that which the heads of the families have of what we give, to be entirely loſt; yet we had better loſe ſomething of our eſtates, than ſuffer thoſe who are really proper objects of charity to remain without relief.

Object. 10. Some may object and ſay, Others do not their duty. If others did their duty, the poor would be ſufficiently ſupplied. If others did as much as we in proportion to their ability and obligation, the poor would have enough to help them out of their ſtraits. Or ſome may ſay, it belongs to others more than it does to us. They have relations

relations that ought to help them; or there are others to whom it more properly belongs than to us.

Ans. We ought to relieve those who are in want through others fault. If our neighbour be poor and in necessity, though others be to blame that it is so, yet that excuses us not from helping him. If it do belong to others more than to us, yet if those others will neglect their duty, and our neighbour therefore remains in want, we may be obliged to relieve him. If a man be brought into straits through the injustice of others, suppose by thieves or robbers, as the poor Jew whom the Samaritan relieved; yet we may be obliged to relieve him, though it be not through our fault that he is in want, but through that of other men. And whether that fault be a commission or a neglect, alters not the case.

As to the poor Jew that fell among thieves between Jerusalem and Jericho, it more properly belonged to those thieves who brought him into that distress, to relieve him, than to any other person. Yet seeing they would not do it, others were not excused; and the Samaritan did no more than his duty in relieving him as he did, though it properly belonged to others.

So if a man have children or other relations, to whom it most properly belongs to relieve him; yet if they will not do it, the obligation to relieve him falls upon others. So for the same reason we should do the more for the relief of the poor, because others neglect to do their proportion, or what belongs to them; and that because by the neglect of others to do their proportion they need the more, their necessity is the greater.

Object. 11. The law makes provision for the poor, and obliges the respective towns in which they live to provide for them; therefore some argue, that there is no occasion for particular persons to exercise any charity this way. They say, the case is not the same with us now, as it was in the primitive church; for then Christians were under an Heathen government: and that, therefore, however the charity of Christians in those times be much to be commended; yet now, by reason of our different circumstances, there is no occasion for private charity; because, in the state in which Christians now are, provision is made for the poor otherwise.

Ans. This objection is built upon these two suppositions, both which I suppose are false.

1. That

1. That the towns are obliged by law to relieve every one who otherwiſe would be an object of charity. This I ſuppoſe to be falſe, unleſs it be ſuppoſed that none are proper objects of charity, but thoſe that have no eſtate left to live upon, which is very unreaſonable, and what I have already ſhown to be falſe, in anſwer to the fourth objection, in ſhewing that it doth not anſwer the rules of Chriſtian charity, to relieve only thoſe who are reduced to extremity.

Nor do I ſuppoſe it was ever the deſign of the law requiring the various towns to ſupport their own poor, to cut off all occaſion for Chriſtian charity: nor is it fit there ſhould be ſuch a law. It is fit that the law ſhould make proviſion for thoſe that have no eſtates of their own; it is not fit that perſons who are reduced to that extremity ſhould be left to ſo precarious a ſource of ſupply as a voluntary charity. They are in extreme neceſſity of relief, and therefore it is fit that there ſhould be ſomething ſure for them to depend on. But a voluntary charity in this corrupt world is an uncertain thing. Therefore the wiſdom of the legiſlature did not think fit to leave thoſe who are ſo reduced upon ſuch a precarious foundation for ſubſiſtence. But I ſuppoſe not that it was ever the deſign of the law to make ſuch proviſion for all that are in want, as to leave no room for Chriſtian charity.

2. This objection is built upon another ſuppoſition, which is equally falſe, viz. That there are in fact none who are proper objects of charity, but thoſe that are relieved by the town. Let the deſign of the law be what it will, yet if there are in fact perſons who are ſo in want, as to ſtand in need of our charity, then that law doth not free us from obligation to relieve them by our charity. For as we have juſt now ſhown, in anſwer to the laſt objection, if it more properly belong to others to relieve them than to us; yet if they do it not, we are not free So that if it be true, that it belongs to the town to relieve all who are in want, ſo as to be proper objects of charity; yet if the town in fact do it not, we are not excuſed.

If one of our neighbours ſuffers through the fault of a particular perſon, a thief or robber, or of a town, it alters not the caſe: but if he ſuffer and be without relief, it is an act of Chriſtian charity in us to relieve him. Now it is too obvious to be denied, that there are in fact perſons ſo in want, that it would be a charitable act in us to help them, notwithſtanding all that is done by the town. A man muſt hide his eyes, to think otherwiſe.

SERMON XXXIII.*

The Nature and End of Excommunication.

1 COR. v. 11.

But now I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with ſuch an one, no not to eat.

THE church of Corinth, in primitive times, was very famous for the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, as well as for the number of its members. This church was firſt planted by the Apoſtle Paul: he was, as it were, the ſpiritual father of it, who had converted its members from Heatheniſm to Chriſtianity; as he reminds them in theſe epiſtles; 1 Cor. iv. 15. "For though ye have ten "thouſand inſtructors in Chriſt, yet have ye not many fa- "thers. For in Chriſt Jeſus I have begotten you through "the goſpel." We have an account of the Apoſtle's planting this church in the 18th chapter of Acts.

It was doubtleſs excellently regulated by him, when he was preſent to have an immediate inſpection of its affairs. But in his abſence many corruptions and diſorders crept in among its members. Among other diſorders, one of the members had been guilty of a very heinous kind of wickedneſs: He had committed inceſt in one of the groſſeſt degrees of it, in having his father's wife; which the Apoſtle obſerves was infamous even among the Heathens. And the church of Corinth had tolerated him in it, ſo as not-

* Preached on the occaſion of the excommunication of a perſon, July 22, 1739.

withſtanding

withſtanding to ſuffer him to continue in their communion.

The chapter of which our text is a part, is wholly upon this ſubject. The Apoſtle reproves the church for conniving at this wickedneſs, as they had done in not excommunicating the perſon who had been guilty of it; and directs them ſpeedily to caſt him out from among them; thus delivering him to Satan. He orders them to purge out ſuch ſcandalous perſons, as the Jews were wont to purge leaven out of their houſes when they kept the paſſover.

In the text and two foregoing verſes he more particularly explains their duty with reſpect to ſuch vicious perſons, and enjoins it on them not to keep company with ſuch. But then ſhows the difference they ought to obſerve in their carriage towards thoſe who were vicious among the Heathen, who had never joined with the church, and towards thoſe of the ſame vicious character who had been their profeſſed brethren; ſee verſ. 9.—12. "I wrote unto you, "not to company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with "the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or ex- "tortioners, or with idolaters; for then muſt ye needs go "out of the world. But now I have written unto you, not "to keep company, if any man that is *called a brother* be a "fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a "drunkard, or an extortioner, with ſuch an one, no not to "eat."

In the words of the text we may obſerve two things, viz. the duty, and the object.

1. The duty enjoined, of which two things are expreſſed: (1.) The behaviour required, negatively expreſſed, *not to keep company;* (2.) The manner or degree, *no not to eat.*

2. The object, who is deſigned by two things.

(1.) That he appear to be vicious; a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner. We are not to underſtand only theſe particular vices, but theſe, or any other groſs ſins, or whatever carries in it viſible wickedneſs. It is evident, that the apoſtle here, and in the context, intends that we ſhould exclude out of our company all thoſe who are viſibly wicked men. For in the foregoing verſes he expreſſes his meaning by this, that we ſhould purge out the old leaven; and, explaining what he means by leaven, he includes all viſible wickedneſs; as in verſ. 8. "Therefore let us keep the feaſt, not with "old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and *wic-*

" *kedneſs*, but with the unleavened bread of ſincerity and " truth."

(2.) The other thing by which the object of this behaviour or dealing is characteriſed, is, that he be one *that is called a brother*, or one that hath been a profeſſed Chriſtian, and a member of the church.

DOCTRINE. Thoſe members of the viſible Chriſtian church that are become viſibly wicked, ought not to be tolerated in the church, but ſhould be excommunicated.

In handling this ſubject, I ſhall ſpeak, (1.) Of the nature of excommunication; (2.) Of the ſubject; and, (3.) Of the ends of it.

I. I ſhall ſay ſomething of the nature of excommunication. It is a puniſhment executed in the name and according to the will of Chriſt, whereby a perſon who hath heretofore enjoyed the privileges of a member of the viſible church of Chriſt, is caſt out of the church and delivered unto Satan.

It is of the nature of a puniſhment inflicted: it is expreſsly called a puniſhment by the Apoſtle in 2 Cor. ii. 6. Speaking of the excommunicated Corinthian, he ſays, " Sufficient to ſuch a man is this puniſhment." For tho' it be not deſigned by man for the deſtruction of the perſon who is the ſubject of it, but for his correction, and ſo is of the nature of a caſtigatory puniſhment, at leaſt ſo far as it is a puniſhment inflicted by men; yet it is in itſelf a great and dreadful calamity, and the moſt ſevere puniſhment that Chriſt hath appointed in the viſible church. Although in it the church is to ſeek only the good of the perſon and his recovery from ſin, there appearing, upon proper trial, no reaſon to hope for his recovery by gentler means; yet it is at God's ſovereign diſpoſal, whether it ſhall iſſue in his humiliation and repentance, or in his dreadful and eternal deſtruction; as it always doth iſſue in the one or the other.

In the definition of excommunication now given, two things are chiefly worthy of conſideration. 1. Wherein this puniſhment conſiſts. 2. By whom it is inflicted.

FIRST, I would ſhow wherein this puniſhment conſiſts; and it is obſervable that there is in it ſomething *privative*, and ſomething *poſitive*.

Firſt,

Firſt, There is ſomething *privative* in excommunication, which conſiſts in being deprived of a benefit heretofore enjoyed. This part of the puniſhment is in ſcripture expreſſed by being *caſt out of the church*. So this puniſhment in the Jewiſh church was called putting out of the ſynagogue, John xvi. 2. The word *ſynagogue* is a word of the ſame ſignification as the word *church*. So this puniſhment in the Chriſtian church is called *caſting out of the church*. The Apoſtle John, blaming Diotrephes for inflicting this puniſhment without cauſe, ſays, 3 John v. 10. "He caſteth them "out of the church."

This privative part of the puniſhment is ſometimes expreſſed by the church's *withdrawing* from a member, 2 Theſſ. iii. 6. "Now we command you, brethren, in the "name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that ye *withdraw* your-"ſelves from every brother that walketh diſorderly."

The privative part of the puniſhment of excommunication conſiſts in this, viz. in being cut off from the enjoyment of the privileges of God's viſible people. The whole world of mankind is divided into theſe two ſorts, thoſe that are God's viſible people, and ſo are within the viſible church of Chriſt; and thoſe that are without the viſible church, and are of the viſible kingdom of Satan. Now it is a great privilege to be one of the viſible people of God, to be within the viſible church of Chriſt, and to enjoy the benefits of ſuch: it is abundantly ſo ſpoken of in ſcripture. On the other hand, it is very doleful to be without this viſible kingdom, or to be cut off from the privileges of it, and to be excluded, as thoſe who are to be treated as belonging to the viſible kingdom of Satan.

The privileges which are to be enjoyed in the viſible church of Chriſt, from which excommunicated perſons are to be cut off, are of theſe four kinds; 1. The charity of the church. 2. Brotherly ſociety with the members of the church. 3. The fellowſhip of the church in worſhip. 4. The internal privileges of viſible Chriſtians.

1. They are cut off from being the objects of that charity of God's people which is due to Chriſtian brethren. They are not indeed cut off from all the charity of God's people, for all men ought to be the objects of their love. There is a love due from the people of God even to the Heathens and others who are not in the viſible church of Chriſt. Our love ſhould be like that of our heavenly Father, who is kind to the evil and the good. But I ſpeak of the brotherly charity due to viſible ſaints.

Charity,

Charity, as the Apoſtle repreſents it, is as it were the bond by which the ſeveral members of the church of Chriſt are united together: and therefore he calls it the bond of perfectneſs; Col. iii. 14. "Put on charity, which is the "bond of perfectneſs." But when a perſon is juſtly excommunicated, it is like a phyſician's cutting off a diſeaſed member from the body; and then the bond which before united it to the body is cut or broken.

A ſcandal is the ſame as a ſtumbling-block; and when a member of the viſible church is guilty of ſcandal, a ſtumbling-block is laid before others in two reſpects.

(1.) It is a diſhonour to God, a bad example, and a ſtumbling-block, as it is the occaſion of others falling into ſin.

(2.) It is a ſtumbling-block in the way of the charity of his fellow-Chriſtians towards the offender. As long therefore as the ſcandal remains, it ſtumbles the charity of others: and if it finally remain after proper endeavours to remove it, then it breaks their charity, and ſo the offender is cut off from the charity of the church. He is cut off from the charity of the church in the following reſpects.

[1.] As he is cut off from the charitable opinion and eſteem of the church; ſo that the church cannot any longer look upon him as a Chriſtian, and ſo rejects him; therefore excommunication is called a rejection, Tit. iii. 10. "A "man that is an heretic, after the firſt and ſecond admoni- "tion, *reject*." This implies that the church doth not approve, or that it diſapproves the perſon as a Chriſtian: it cannot any longer charitably look upon him as a ſaint, or fellow-worſhipper of God, and can do no other than, on the contrary, eſteem him an enemy of God; and ſo doth openly withdraw its charity from him, ceaſing to acknowledge him as a fellow-Chriſtian, or fellow-worſhipper of God, and henceforward treating him as no more a fellow-worſhipper than the Heathens.

[2.] The perſon excommunicated is alſo cut off from that honour which is due to brethren and fellow-Chriſtians. To be a viſible Chriſtian is an honourable character, and much honour is due to perſons of this character. But excommunicated perſons forfeit this honour. Chriſtians ought not to pay that honour and reſpect to them which they pay to others; but ſhould treat them as unworthy of ſuch honour, that they may be aſhamed. Chriſt tells us, that they ſhould "be unto us as heathen men and publi- "cans," (Matth. xviii. 17.) which implies a withdrawing from

from them that common reſpect and honour which we pay to others. There doubtleſs therefore ſhould be a great difference between the reſpect that we ſhow ſuch, and that which we ſhow others: We ought to treat them ſo as to let them plainly ſee that we do not count them worthy of it, and ſo as tends to put them to ſhame.

[3.] They ought to be cut off from that brotherly complacence that is due to Chriſtian brethren. Much love and complacency is due to thoſe who are viſible Chriſtians, or to thoſe whom we are obliged in charity to receive as ſaints; and on this account, becauſe they are viſible Chriſtians. But this complacence excommunicated perſons forfeit.

The love of benevolence or of good-will is indeed ſtill due to them, as it is to the viſibly wicked: We ſhould ſtill wiſh well to them, and ſeek their good. Excommunication itſelf is to be performed as an act of benevolence or good-will: We ſhould ſeek their good by it; and it is to be uſed as a mean of their eternal ſalvation. But complacence and delight in them as viſible Chriſtians is to be withdrawn; and on the contrary they are to be the objects of diſplacency and abhorrence. When they are excommunicated they are avoided and rejected with abhorrence, as viſibly and apparently wicked. We are to caſt them out as an unclean thing which defiles the church of God.

In this ſenſe the Pſalmiſt profeſſes an hatred of thoſe who were the viſible enemies of God. Pſal. cxxxix. 21. 22. "Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? And am "I not grieved with thoſe that riſe up againſt thee? I hate "them with perfect hatred." Not that he hated them with an hatred of malice or ill-will, but with diſplacency and abhorrence of their wickedneſs. In this reſpect we ought to be the children of our Father who is in heaven, who, though he loves many wicked men with a love of benevolence, yet cannot love them with a love of complacence. Thus excommunicated perſons are cut off from the charity of the church.

2. They are cut off from the ſociety which Chriſtians have together as brethren. I ſpeak now of the common ſociety which Chriſtian brethren have together. Thus we are commanded to *withdraw* from ſuch; 2 Theſſ. iii. 6. To *avoid* them; Rom. xvi 17. To *have no company* with them; 2 Theſſ. iii. 14. And to *treat them as heathens and publicans*; Matth. xviii. 17. The people of God are not only to avoid ſociety with viſibly wicked men in ſacred things; but when excommunicated, as much as may be to avoid and withdraw

withdraw from them as to that common ſociety which is proper to ſubſiſt among Chriſtians.

Not that they ſhould avoid ſpeaking to them on any occaſion. All manner and all degrees of ſociety are not forbidden; but all unneceſſary ſociety, all ſuch ſociety as holds forth complacence in them, or ſuch as is wont to be among thoſe that delight in the company of one another. We ſhould not aſſociate ourſelves with them ſo as to make them our companions. Yea there ought to be ſuch an avoiding of their company as ſhall ſhow great diſlike, or ſuch as there is wont to be between perſons who very much diſlike each other.

Particularly, we are forbidden ſuch a degree of ſociety, or appearance of aſſociating ourſelves with them, as there is in making them our gueſts at our tables, or in being their gueſts at their tables; as is manifeſt in the text, where we are commanded to have no company with them, *no not to eat*. That this reſpects not eating with them at the Lord's ſupper, but a common eating, is evident by two things.

(1.) It is evident by the words, that this eating here forbidden, is one of the loweſt degrees of keeping company, which are forbidden. Keep no company with ſuch an one, ſaith the Apoſtle, *no not to eat*: As much as to ſay, no not in ſo low a degree as to eat with him. But this would be a ridiculous ſort of language for eating with him at the Lord's ſupper, which is the very higheſt degree of viſible Chriſtian communion. Who can ſuppoſe that the Apoſtle would ſpeak ſuch nonſenſe as this, Take heed and have no company with a man, no not ſo much as in the higheſt degree of communion that you can have.

(2.) The Apoſtle mentions this eating as a way of keeping company which they might not hold with an excommunicated brother, which however they might hold with the Heathen. He tells them, not to keep company with fornicators; then he informs them, he means not with the fornicators of this world, that is, the Heathens; but, ſaith he, "if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, "&c. with ſuch an one keep no company, *no not to eat*." This makes it moſt apparent, that the Apoſtle doth not mean eating at the Lord's table; for ſo they might not keep company with the fornicators of the Heathens any more than with an excommunicated perſon. Here naturally ariſe two queſtions.

QUEST.

QUEST. 1. How far are the church to treat excommunicated perſons as they would treat the Heathens, or thoſe who never have been of the viſible church? I anſwer, they are to treat them as Heathens, excepting in theſe two things, in which there is a difference to be obſerved.

(1.) They are to have a greater concern for their welfare ſtill than if they never had been brethren, and therefore ought to take more pains, by admonitions and otherwiſe, to reclaim and ſave them, than they are obliged to take towards thoſe who have been always Heathens. This ſeems manifeſt by that of the Apoſtle, 2 Theſſ. iii. 14. 15. "And "if any man obey not our word by this epiſtle, note that "man, and have no company with him, that he may be "aſhamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admo- "niſh him as a brother." The conſideration that he hath been a brother heretofore, and that we have not ſo finally caſt him off from that relation, but that we are ſtill hoping and uſing means for his recovery, obliges us to concern ourſelves more for the good of his ſoul than for thoſe with whom we never had any ſuch connection; and ſo to pray for him, and to take pains with him by admoniſhing him.

The very reaſon of the thing ſhows the ſame. For this very ordinance of excommunication is uſed for this end, that we may thereby obtain the good of the perſon excommunicated. And ſurely we ſhould be more concerned for the good of thoſe who have been our brethren, and who are now under the operation of means uſed by us for their good, than for thoſe with whom we never had any ſpecial connection. Thus there ſhould be more of the love of benevolence exerciſed towards perſons excommunicated, than towards thoſe who never were members of the church.—But then,

(2.) On the other hand, as to what relates to the love of complacence, they ought to be treated with greater diſplacency and diſreſpect than the Heathen. This is plain by the text and context. For the Apoſtle plainly doth not require of us to avoid the company of the Heathen, or the fornicators of the world, but doth expreſsly require us to avoid the company of any brother who ſhall be guilty of any of the vices pointed out in the text, or any other like vice, and therefore be excommunicated.

This is alſo plain by the reaſon of the thing. For thoſe who have once been viſible Chriſtians and have apoſtatized and caſt off that viſibility, deſerve to be treated with more

abhorrence than thoſe who have never made any pretenſions to Chriſtianity. The ſin of ſuch in apoſtatizing from their profeſſion is more aggravated than the ſin of thoſe who never made any profeſſion. They far more diſhonour religion, and are much more abhorred of God. Therefore when Chriſt ſays, Matth. xviii. 7. "Let him be unto "thee as an Heathen man and a publican," it is not meant that we ſhould treat an excommunicated brother as Chriſtians ought to treat Heathens and publicans; for they might eat with them, as Chriſt himſelf did; and the Apoſtle gives leave to eat with ſuch, 1 Cor. x. 27.; and in the context gives leave to keep company with ſuch; yet forbids to eat with an excommunicated perſon.

Chriſt's meaning muſt be, that we ſhould treat an excommunicated perſon, as the Jews were wont to treat the Heathens and publicans; and as the diſciples had been always taught among the Jews, and brought up, and uſed to treat them. They would by no means eat with publicans and ſinners; they would not eat with the Gentiles, or with the Samaritans. Therefore Peter durſt not eat with the Gentiles when the Jews were preſent; Gal. ii. 12.

QUEST. 2. What kindneſs and reſpect may and ought to be ſhown to ſuch perſons?

(1.) There are ſome things by which the members of the church are obliged to ſhow kindneſs to them; and theſe things are chiefly two, to pray for them, and to admoniſh them.

(2.) The common duties and offices of humanity ought to be performed towards them; ſuch as relieving them when they are ſick, or under any other diſtreſs; allowing them thoſe benefits of human ſociety, and that help, which are needful for the ſupport and defence of their lives and property.

(3.) The duties of natural and civil relations are ſtill to be performed towards them. Excommunication doth not releaſe children from the obligation of duty to their parents, nor parents from parental affection and care towards their children. Nor are huſbands and wives releaſed from the duties proper to their relation. And ſo of all other leſs relations, whether natural, domeſtic, or civil.

3. They are cut off from the fellowſhip of the worſhip of the Chriſtian church. The true notion of the viſible church of Chriſt, is that part of mankind, which, as his people,

people, is united in his worſhip, or which agrees in upholding his appointed worſhip. And the notion of a particular viſible church of Chriſt, is a particular ſociety of worſhippers, or of viſible ſaints, united for the ſocial worſhip of God according to his inſtitutions or ordinances. One great and main privilege then, which the members of ſuch a church enjoy, is fellowſhip in the worſhip which God hath appointed in his church. But they that are excommunicated are cut off from this privilege, they have no fellowſhip, no communion with the people of God in any part of their worſhip: they can have no fellowſhip with them in baptiſm, or the Lord's Supper, or in the prayers which they offer up, or in the praiſes which they ſing.

He that is the mouth of the worſhipping congregation in offering up public prayers, is not the mouth of thoſe who are excommunicated: he is the mouth only of the worſhipping ſociety; but they are caſt out of that ſociety. The church may and ought to pray for ſuch, but they cannot have fellowſhip with ſuch in prayer. The miniſter, when ſpeaking in prayer, ought to pray for thoſe that are ſhut out of the ſociety of God's viſible ſervants or worſhippers; but he doth not ſpeak in their name: he ſpeaks only in the name of the united ſociety of viſible ſaints or worſhippers. If the people of God were to put up prayers in their name, it would imply a receiving of them into charity, or that they charitably looked upon them, and received them as the ſervants or worſhippers of God. But, as was obſerved before, excommunicated perſons are in this reſpect caſt out of the charity of the church, and the church hath no longer charity for them, as the ſervants or worſhippers of God; but looks upon them as wicked men and enemies of God, and treats them as ſuch.

So when a congregation of viſible ſaints join in ſinging the praiſes of God, as the Pſalmiſt ſays, Pſal. xxxiv. 3. "Let us extol his name together;" they do it only as joining with thoſe that are in their charity to be looked upon as fellow-ſervants and fellow-worſhippers of God. They do it not as joining with Heathens; nor do the people of God ſay to the open enemies of God, remaining ſuch, "Come let us extol his name together;" but they ſay it to their brethren in God's ſervice. If we ought not to join with excommunicated perſons in familiar ſociety, much leſs ought we to hold fellowſhip with them in ſolemn worſhip.

4. There are privileges of a more internal nature, which thoſe who are members of the viſible church enjoy, from which excommunicated perſons are cut off. They being God's covenant people, are in the way of covenant bleſſings; and therefore have more encouragement to come to God by prayer for any mercy they need. The viſible church is the people among whom God hath ſet his tabernacle, and among whom he is wont to beſtow his bleſſings. But they that are excommunicated are in a ſenſe caſt out of God's ſight, or from God's face, into a land of baniſhment, as Cain was; Gen. iv. 14. 16. They are not in the way of thoſe ſmiles of Providence, thoſe tokens of God's favour, and that light of God's countenance, which thoſe who are within are in the way of. Nor, as they are caſt out from among God's covenant people, have they the divine covenant to plead, as the members of the church have.

Thus far I have conſidered the privative part of the puniſhment of excommunication.——I now proceed,

Secondly, to the poſitive part, which is expreſſed by being delivered to Satan, in verſ. 5. of the context. By which two things ſeem to be ſignified.

1. A being delivered over to the calamities to which they are ſubject who belong to the viſible kingdom of the devil. As they who are excommunicated are thruſt out from among the viſible people of God; ſo doubtleſs they are to be looked upon, in moſt reſpects at leaſt, as being in the miſerable, deplorable circumſtances in which thoſe are who are under the viſible tyranny of the devil, as the Heathens are. And in many reſpects they doubtleſs ſuffer the cruel tyranny of the devil in a manner agreeable to the condition they are in, being caſt out into his viſible kingdom.

2. It is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that God is wont to make the devil the inſtrument of thoſe peculiar, ſevere chaſtiſements which their apoſtacy deſerves. As they deſerve more ſevere chaſtiſement than the Heathens, and are delivered to Satan for the deſtruction of the fleſh: ſo we may well ſuppoſe, either that God is wont to let Satan looſe, ſorely to moleſt them outwardly or inwardly, and by ſuch ſevere means to deſtroy the fleſh, and to humble them; or that he ſuffers the devil to take poſſeſſion of them, dreadfully to harden them, and ſo to deſtroy them for ever. For altho' what men are to aim at, is only the deſtruction of the fleſh; yet whether it ſhall prove the deſtruction of the fleſh, or the eternal and more dreadful deſtruction of them, is at God's ſovereign diſpoſal.——So much for the nature of excommunication.

SECONDLY,

SECONDLY, I come to ſhow by whom this puniſhment is to be looked on as being inflicted.

1. When it is regularly and duly inflicted, it is to be looked upon as done by Chriſt himſelf. That is imported in the definition, that it is according to his will, and to the directions given in his word. And therefore he is to be looked upon as principal in it, and we ought to eſteem it to be as really and truly from him, as if he were on earth, and perſonally inflicted it.

2. As it is inflicted by men, it is only done miniſterially. They do not act of themſelves in this, any more than in preaching the word. When the word is preached, it is the word of Chriſt which is ſpoken, as the ſpeaker ſpeaks in the name of Chriſt, as his ambaſſador. So, when a church excommunicates a member, the church acts in the name of Chriſt, and by his authority, not by its own. It is governed by his will, not by its own. Indeed it is only a particular application of the word of Chriſt.

Therefore it is promiſed, that when it is duly done, it ſhall be confirmed in heaven; i. e. Chriſt will confirm it, by acknowledging it to be his own act; and he will, in his future providence, have regard to what is done thus as done by himſelf: he will look on the perſon, and treat him as caſt out and delivered to Satan by himſelf; and if he repent not, will for ever reject and damn him: Matth. xviii. 18. "Verily I ſay unto you, Whatſoever ye ſhall bind on "earth, ſhall be bound in heaven;" John xx. 23. "Whoſe "ſoever ſins ye retain, they are retained."——I ſhall now, as was propoſed,

II. Endeavour to ſhow who are the proper ſubjects of excommunication. They are thoſe members of the church which are now become viſibly wicked. Viſibly wicked perſons ought not to be tolerated in the church, but ſhould be caſt out, as the very name and nature of the viſible church ſhow, which is a ſociety of viſible ſaints, or viſibly holy perſons. When any of theſe viſible ſaints become viſibly wicked men, they ought to be caſt out of the church. Now, the members of the church become viſibly wicked by theſe two things:

1. By groſs ſin. Saints may be guilty of other ſins, and very often are, without throwing any juſt ſtumbling block in the way of public charity, or of the charity of their Chriſtian brethren. The common failures of humanity, and the daily ſhortcomings of the beſt of men, do not ordinarily

dinarily ſtumble the charity of their brethren; but when they fall into any groſs ſin, this effect follows; for we naturally argue, that he who hath committed ſome groſs ſin hath doubtleſs much more practiſed leſs and more ſecret ſins; and ſo we doubt concerning the ſoundneſs and ſincerity of his heart. Therefore all thoſe who commit any groſs ſin, as they ſtumble the charity of their brethren, are proper ſubjects of diſcipline; and unleſs they confeſs their ſin, and manifeſt their repentance, are proper ſubjects of excommunication. —— This leads me to ſay,

2. That the members of the church do eſpecially become viſibly wicked, when they remain impenitent in their ſins, after proper means uſed to reclaim them. Merely being guilty of groſs ſin, is a ſtumbling-block to charity, unleſs repentance immediately ſucceed; but eſpecially when the guilty perſon remains obſtinate and contumacious; in ſuch a caſe he is moſt clearly a viſibly wicked perſon, and therefore to be dealt with as ſuch; to be caſt out into the wicked world, the kingdom of Satan, where he appears to belong.

Nor is contumacy in *groſs* ſins only a ſufficient ground of excommunication. In the text the apoſtle commands us to inflict this cenſure, not only on thoſe who are guilty of the groſs ſins of fornication, idolatry, and drunkenneſs, but alſo on thoſe who are guilty of covetouſneſs, railing, and extortion, which, at leaſt in ſome degrees of them, are generally eſteemed no very heinous crimes. And in Rom. xvi. 17. the ſame apoſtle commands the church to excommunicate "them who cauſe diviſions and offences, "contrary to the doctrine they had learned;" and in 2 Theſſ. iii. 14. to excommunicate every one who ſhould "not obey his word by that epiſtle." Now, according to theſe precepts, every one who doth not obſerve the doctrine of the apoſtles, and their word contained in their epiſtles, and ſo, by parity of reaſon, the divine inſtructions contained in the other parts of ſcripture, is to be excommunicated, provided he continue impenitent and contumacious. So that contumacy and impenitence in any real and manifeſt ſin whatſoever, deſerve excommunication.

III. I come at length to ſpeak of the ends of this eccleſiaſtical cenſure. The ſpecial ends of it are theſe three.

1. That the church may be kept pure, and the ordinances of God not be defiled. This end is mentioned in the context, verſ. 6. &c. "Know ye not that a little leaven lea-

"veneth

" veneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old " leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleaven- " ed. Therefore let us keep the feaſt, not with old leaven, " neither with the leaven of malice and wickedneſs, but " with the unleavened bread of ſincerity and truth."

When the church and the ordinances of God are defiled by the toleration of wicked men in the church, God the Father, Jeſus Chriſt, the head and founder of the church, the religion of the goſpel, and the church itſelf, are diſhonoured and expoſed to contempt.

That the other members themſelves may not be defiled, it is neceſſary that they bear a teſtimony againſt ſin, by cenſuring it whenever it appears among them, eſpecially in the groſſer acts of wickedneſs. If they neglect ſo to do, they contract guilt by the very neglect; and not only ſo, but they expoſe themſelves to learn the ſame vices which they tolerate in others; for " a little leaven leaveneth the whole " lump." Hence that earneſt caution of the apoſtle, Heb. xii. 15. " looking diligently, leſt any man fail of the grace " of God; leſt any root of bitterneſs ſpringing up, trouble " you, and *thereby many be defiled.*"

2. That others may be deterred from wickedneſs. As the neglect of proper cenſure with reſpect to viſibly wicked church-members, tends to lead and encourage others to commit the ſame wickedneſs; ſo the infliction of proper cenſure tends to reſtrain others, not only from the ſame wickedneſs, but from ſin in general. This therefore is repeatedly mentioned as one end of the puniſhments appointed to be inflicted by the law of Moſes: Deut. xiii. 11. " And " all Iſrael ſhall hear, and fear, and ſhall do no more ſuch " wickedneſs as this is among you."

3. That the perſons themſelves may be reclaimed, and that their ſouls may be ſaved. When other more gentle means have been uſed in vain, then it is the duty of the church to uſe this, which is more ſevere, in order to bring them to conviction, ſhame, and humiliation; and that, by being rejected and avoided by the church, and treated with diſreſpect, they may be convinced how they deſerve to be for ever diſowned of God; that by being delivered unto Satan, they may learn how they deſerve for ever to be delivered up to him; that by his being made the inſtrument of their chaſtiſement, they may learn how they deſerve to be tormented by him, without any reſt day or night, for ever and ever.

This,

This, with the counſels and admonitions by which it is to be followed, is the laſt mean that the church is to uſe, in order to reclaim thoſe members which are become viſibly wicked. If this be ineffectual, what is next to be expected is deſtruction without remedy.

APPLICATION.

I ſhall apply this ſubject in a brief uſe of exhortation to this church, to maintain ſtrictly the proper diſcipline of the goſpel in general, and particularly that part of it which conſiſts in excommunication. To this end I ſhall juſt ſuggeſt to you the following motives.

1. That if you tolerate viſible wickedneſs in your members, you will greatly diſhonour God, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the religion which you profeſs, the church in general, and yourſelves in particular. As thoſe members of the church that practiſe wickedneſs themſelves bring diſhonour upon all theſe, ſo do thoſe who tolerate them in it. The language of it is, that God doth not require holineſs in his ſervants; that Chriſt doth not require it in his diſciples; that the religion of the goſpel is not an holy religion; that the church is not a body of holy ſervants of God; and that this church, in particular, hath no regard to holineſs or true virtue.

2. Your own good loudly calls you to the ſame thing. From what hath been already ſaid, you ſee how liable you, as individuals, will be to catch the contagion, which is eaſily communicated by reaſon of the natural depravity, in a degree at leaſt, remaining in the beſt of men.

Beſide, if ſtrict diſcipline be maintained among you, it will not only tend to prevent the ſpread of wickedneſs, but to make you more fruitful in holineſs. If you know that the eyes of your brethren obſerve all your conduct, it will not only make you more guarded againſt ſin, but more careful "to maintain good works," and to abound in "the fruits "of the ſpirit." Thus you will have more abundant joy and peace in believing.

3. The good of thoſe who are without ſhould be another motive. What the apoſtle ſaith with reference to another ſubject, in 1 Cor. xiv. 24. 25. is perfectly applicable to the caſe before us: "But if all propheſy, and there come in "one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convin-"ced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the ſecrets of "his

" his heart made manifeſt; and ſo falling down on his face, " he will worſhip God, and report that God is in you of a " truth." If ſtrict diſcipline, and thereby ſtrict morals, were maintained in the church, it would in all probability be one of the moſt powerful means of conviction and converſion towards thoſe who are without.

4. Benevolence towards your offending brethren themſelves, calls upon you to maintain diſcipline in all its parts. Surely, if we love our brethren, it will grieve us to ſee them wandering from the path of truth and duty; and in proportion as our compaſſion is moved, ſhall we be diſpoſed to uſe all proper means to reclaim and bring them back to the right way. Now, the rules of diſcipline contained in the goſpel are the moſt proper, and beſt adapted to this end, that infinite wiſdom itſelf could deviſe. Even excommunication is inſtituted for this very end, *the deſtruction of the fleſh*, and *the ſalvation of the ſpirit*. If, therefore, we have any love to our offending and erring brethren, it becomes us to manifeſt it, in executing ſtrictly the rules of goſpel-diſcipline, and even excommunication itſelf, whenever it is neceſſary.

5. But the abſolute authority of Chriſt ought to be ſufficient in this caſe, if there were no other motive. Our text is only one of many paſſages in the ſcripture, wherein ſtrict diſcipline is expreſsly commanded, and peremptorily enjoined. Now, how can you be the true diſciples of Chriſt, if you live in the neglect of theſe plain poſitive commands? " If ye love me," ſaith Chriſt, " keep my commandments;" and, " Ye are my friends, if ye do whatſoever I have com- " manded you." But, " He that loveth me not, keepeth " not my ſayings." " And why call ye me Lord, Lord, " and do not the things which I ſay?" If you ſtrictly follow the rules of diſcipline inſtituted by Chriſt, you have reaſon to hope for his bleſſing; for he is wont to bleſs his own inſtitutions, and to ſmile upon the means of grace which he hath appointed.

THE END.

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